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ABSTRACT

This collection presents 91 papers or summaries presented at a 1997 conference on self-study and institutional improvement for institutions of higher education. Papers are grouped in the following chapters (with sample topics in parentheses): (1) "Institutional Mission and Institutional Change" (vision statements; balancing quality and change); (2) "Processes for Improvement" (customer satisfaction, continuous quality improvement); (3) "Implementing Assessment of Student Academic Achievement" (student assessment plans); (4) "Program/Classroom Assessment"; (5) "General Education/Critical Thinking" (the centrality of general education); (6) "The Role of Institutional Planning in a Time of Rapid Change" (strategic planning, institutional effectiveness); (7) "Issues of Institutional Integrity" (institutional values); (8) "New Technologies" (the virtual college, rethinking the library); (9) "The Role and Responsibilities of the Self-Study Coordinator" (maximizing participation, planning); (10) "Self-Study and Evaluation: Practical Advice" (self-study plan and process); (11) "Coordinating Special Types of Evaluation" (self-study in two-year colleges); and (12) "Seeking Initial Affiliation with the Commission" (case study of considering affiliation). (Most papers contain references.) (JLS)

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1997
A Collection of Papers on Self-Study and Institutional Improvement

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A COLLECTION OF PAPERS ON SELF-STUDY AND INSTITUTIONAL IMPROVEMENT

1997

Prepared for the program of the
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
at the 102nd Annual Meeting of the
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Measuring Moving Targets...◆...◆...◆

April 19-22, 1997
in Chicago, Illinois

North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

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1997

The papers included in this collection offer the viewpoints of their authors. The Commission highly recommends them for study and for the advice they contain, but none represent official Commission directions, rules, or policies.

Susan E. Van Kollenburg, Editor

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Foreword

I can still recall the first small package of 16 photostatted articles that Susan Van Kollenburg provided to Annual Meeting registrants in 1984. From that small beginning emerged this significant publication, *A Collection of Papers on Self-Study and Institutional Improvement.* These papers are more than brief summaries of oral presentations made at this Annual Meeting. Each year the papers have become richer and more diverse; every year I have found new lessons taught by talented men and women from affiliated institutions of all types and sizes. This volume builds on the excellent contributions of past collections. Although many of these small essays are grounded in theory, most of them reflect the learning gained from experience. Testimonials to the effectiveness of self-study and peer review abound in these pages. This is an important resource, valuable to all of us engaged in the Commission's work.

Steven D. Crow
Acting Executive Director /
Deputy Director

March 12, 1997

Preface

On behalf of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, I am pleased to present the thirteenth edition of the *Collection of Papers on Self-Study and Institutional Improvement.*

The theme of the 1997 meeting, "Measuring Moving Targets," takes a special look at the challenges to institutions to plan and evolve in a time of rapid change. Many of the 83 papers address this theme in relation to such areas as mission, institutional change, assessment, institutional effectiveness, general education, planning, institutional integrity, new technology, and institutional self-study.

Institutional efforts to assess student academic achievement are discussed in a significant number of papers, including those specifically on assessment, as well as many of the papers on general education, self-study, planning, and other topics. These papers affirm the Commission's shift in focus from the development of assessment plans to the implementation of assessment programs.

For those involved in self-study, the *Collection of Papers* goes beyond the policies and procedures provided in the *Handbook of Accreditation,* to give advice based on actual experience. It is a sharing of ideas and experiences that confirms the adaptability of the process to the diverse membership of the Commission.

The purpose of these papers is to supplement the oral presentations at the Annual Meeting. It is our hope in providing them that they will enhance the learning experience for those attending the Meeting. We are very grateful for the willingness of our speakers to share their experiences with others through this volume, in addition to their presentations at the Meeting. The Annual Meeting has grown larger and stronger because of the excellent support of our affiliated institutions and Consultant-Evaluators.

The Commission invites your comments about the *Collection of Papers,* and welcomes your suggestions for future topics for the Annual Meeting program. Your comments will influence the content and format of future programs.

Susan E. Van Kollenburg
Editor
Associate Director for Programs, Publications,
and Member Services

March 12, 1997

Chapter I

Institutional Mission and Institutional Change

Measuring Moving Targets...◆...◆...◆

102nd Annual Meeting of the North Central Association
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
April 19-22, 1997 • Hyatt Regency Chicago

Shadow College and NCA Accreditation: A Conceptual Framework

Shadow Colleges, Invisible Students, High-Profile Systems

James Jacobs
Roberta Teahen

Introduction

The shadow college emerges from significant developments in higher education institutions since the early 1980s. This paper will argue that the emergence of these new forms of educational delivery need to be examined by accreditation agencies such as the NCA. The paper will discuss the development of the shadow college, review its relationship to regular collegiate programs, and offer guidelines for evaluation of the effectiveness of this alternative educational delivery system. At the March 1997 NCA Annual Meeting, we will propose an evaluative model for consideration by NCA accreditation teams and NCA accredited institutions.

Defining the Shadow College

The term "shadow college," coined by Macomb Community Colleges' President Albert Lorenzo, was identified as the focus of one of the Critical Issues Facing America's Community Colleges (1994-95). Researcher Bill Banach writes:

> ... There is a growing complement of programming developing at the periphery of most two-year institutions Some are now calling this new set of programming options **The Shadow College.**
>
> The shadow college is characterized by an entrepreneurial flair, and prides itself on quick response and flexibility in both content and scheduling. It exists—first and foremost—to serve the needs of its clients (Banach, 1994, p. 22).

The shadow college emerges as the community college's attempt to develop dense, long-term interactions to deal with the learning needs of their communities.

Trends Influencing the Shadow College

Evidence suggests that most of the nation's two-year colleges are engaged in forms of "shadow college" activities, including workforce development, customized training, business consulting, workplace literacy, training needs assessments, contract management, continuing education, apprenticeships, specialized training and certification programs (such as police and fire sciences), and more. As significant as these activities are, in general, they develop outside the traditional instructional for-credit units. The first major trend is the expansion of shadow college activities in two-year colleges.

The shadow college has emerged to meet a community's demands in these areas, because of inherent institutional limitations. The specific internal barriers to providing services such as those identified above may include faculty contracts, programming flexibility, currency of staff in advanced disciplines, financial considerations, college-wide adoption (or lack thereof) of this mission, or more—considerations that are beyond the scope of this paper. The shadow college staff is often comprised of younger, temporary, contingent workers with a skeletal administrative and "marketing" structure. Typically, great flexibility exists to hire outside experts to teach and consult in the educational services provided.

A second trend is the enrollment stagnation or decline for many credit occupational education programs. While the National Assessment of Vocational Education (NAVE) study found that enrollment in postsecondary occupational courses matched general enrollment changes, the number of program completers has been declining. Except for Health and Human Services programs, there has been a 20-year decline in the number of program completers in the occupational areas. Few young people enter occupational programs to complete a program of study terminating in an associate degree.

Indeed, postsecondary occupational education endures many of the challenges of its secondary counterparts: parents and young students are oriented toward baccalaureate degree options, even in general disciplines that may not lead to the acquisition of job skills. Even with the recent expansion of tech prep and school-to-work, and advanced standing articulation agreements, few or no obvious increases in high-school to community or technical college occupational program enrollments are apparent. The adult, returning population constitutes the main group presently served by traditional occupational programs.

Responsibilities for tech prep and school-to-work are often organizationally related to the shadow college unit, which raises interesting challenges for integration with the regular college programming. Tech prep and school-to-work also are most closely linked to secondary programs, yet the bulk of the students in postsecondary occupational programs have been away from high school for long periods.

The third trend, which is connected to the general decline in enrollments, is that rather than serving younger students by providing them the skills for entry-level work, occupational education on the postsecondary level is rapidly becoming a center where current workers return to school for upgrade training, or to learn skills in order to switch careers. This is especially true in manufacturing programs and in many health, human services, and business programs. The community college occupational area is increasingly becoming the job upgrade market for adults.

Students enrolling in community colleges declare their educational intents through a variety of instruments. At Northwestern Michigan College, more than 60 percent of the students taking the ASSET test (a prerequisite to enrollment in credit programs) declare their plans to gain skills to acquire a job, switch careers, or to advance in a job. Simultaneously, a large number of students who do not take the ASSET test, who participate through shadow college programming, typically have a very specific job upgrading intent and their employer also does. Rather than "shadow" students, this group may even be described as invisible. They are reflected in few institutional reports of enrollments. When asking for a student headcount or FTE (full-time-equated) enrollment figure, few community college administrators include their extensive non-credit enrollments within their numbers. While ASSET demographic information acknowledges a strong bias for workforce preparation, these "official" statistics may represent only a minority of the individuals served by the College.

However, in organizational structure and cultural style, many traditional occupational units operate as if they were providing young people with the necessary skills to obtain their first "real job." This same dilemma exists for the College's general education programming; however, to date the "shadow" activities for these disciplines are limited.

The fourth trend focuses upon some structural changes in the workplace, and growing consensus on the long-term value of education and training. Increasingly, education and increased skills are seen, not only as a *pre-condition* for any successful enterprise (or nation for that matter), but as a regular *investment* that needs periodic adjustment, as new technologies or work processes need to be mastered. Many companies are adopting strategic plans that assume continuous learning as part of the responsibility of their organizations and the people who work in them.

The increased demands for learning are hard to place within the conventional academic for-credit framework. But even further, they undermine what was often perceived as the difference between "education" and "training," i.e., that education was general, broad, conceptual learning, and that after getting a job, an individual would be "trained" according to the specific skill needs of the company. Today that distinction, if it ever existed, has disappeared. Students who wish to be successful in the world of work need to have both generalizable as well as specific skills. And they need to upgrade them continuously.

Thus, the activity of "education" gets redefined—individuals and firms seek out courses, seminars, and other education produced to continue to upgrade their skills and the skills of their workforce. The logic of their requests is determined by the internal strategies of the firms or their career paths, *which no institution or individual faculty, however current in their discipline, can pretend to know.* Institutions and their staffs need to respond to the demands of this market with products that make sense if the institution is going to fulfill its mission of providing for the needs of this community. This is the basis of flexibility, agility, and all the buzzwords that many shadow college participants assume are part of the operating culture of their programs. It also distinguishes their operations from the traditional for-credit models.

In saying this, we do not mean that institutions do not exercise professional judgment and that individuals do not come to college to learn in a comprehensive set of courses based upon the best abilities of the staff to determine these issues. That should continue. But the professional judgment of the staff should aid them in seeing that the society in which we live is so complex and the information about any one subject so enormous, that no one can "know it all." A true professional would take the knowledge of the subjects and apply them to concrete needs of the communities, defining and shaping their education around the needs of the people. That precisely defines what the best of the shadow activities attempt to do.

Additional trends of political inclinations toward privatization of some government services, concerns of many citizens regarding competition from public sector providers, the movement of education toward a less linear and more continual, resulting in a more intermittent, part-time student.

A Perspective

In most institutions, the shadow college is growing in proportion both to the revenue produced by the unit and to the significance of its activities within the institution. As national studies conducted by the NCRVE, the League for Innovation, and Macomb's Institute for Future Studies indicate, more than 80-90 percent of the community colleges have some form of customized training. The revenue and participation numbers often miss the critical significance of these activities to the local economic growth of the communities served. After more than a decade of customized training, many colleges can claim credit for retraining and upgrading a significant number of the communities' manufacturing, public service, and other workers.

Almost all of the police and fire fighters in Macomb county have been trained by the college's non-credit academies. Macomb's auto-body design program and customized training have provided technical training to 40 percent of all the designers working for General Motors. The majority of designers employed in the larger engineering service firms serving the Big Three have completed retraining programs at Macomb.

Northwestern's Center for Business and Industry has trained thousands of workers in quality processes and ISO 9000 in the expanding manufacturing base of the Grand Traverse region. Thousands have also gained computer application and teamwork skills from both contract and continuing education offerings. Many regional businesses have been provided business assistance in marketing, management, computer applications, and accounting at a time when credit business enrollments in many Michigan colleges, including NMC's, have declined dramatically. The need for the services of shadow colleges is clear. The stories can be repeated in many community colleges in the United States. The cumulative impact of the education and training provided by the shadow college is profound.

Shadow units frequently have the most intimate ties with industry. They tend to be more involved with work-based experiences and be less encumbered with the regulations and culture of the traditional college. Many function as entrepreneurial units—whose very survival is based upon the number of contracts and income generated by their activities. As a result, the units are extremely "outcomes" oriented—which is measured in different ways on different campuses. One standard way is net revenues.

A 1992 survey of Michigan Community College leaders conducted by the Commission on New Directions for Michigan Community Colleges identified and prioritized the key issues for two-year colleges. The most critical issue identified was "clarifying the mission and expectations of Michigan's public education providers." The collective opinion was that currently there is considerable ambiguity...as a result, there is evidence of duplication in providing certain services, while voids exist in other aspects of programming. This problem has become more acute as adult literacy, worker retraining, and lifelong learning have become growing areas of public need.

Not only are institutional leaders confused about their roles in this arena, many are even less certain of what the critical success indicators should be and how to measure these. As shadow college operations continue to grow, and traditional areas stagnate or decline, critical questions are being raised in decision-making areas of the institution: What is the core nature of the learning business on the postsecondary level? How do we resolve institutional competition for resources within the college? What should the staffing requirements be for the faculty of the future? How can the intelligence gained in the shadow college be translated into other college services? Finally, who will decide these issues: the Board of Trustees, the clients, state governmental agencies, or the communities themselves?

Why This Is Important to NCA

The shadow college is a growing phenomena among community colleges. Its growth represents a unique feature of these colleges: they need to become learning organizations within the communities that they serve. Becoming a learning organization suggests much more than credit instruction and more than simple concentration upon the credit student as the sole "customer." The shadow college is the organizational manifestation of the recognition that community colleges have:

- ◇ **diverse missions,** based upon a comprehensive need to serve their communities (e.g., most college mission and purposes statements include references to economic development and community educational leadership);
- ◇ **multiple constituencies,** reflecting the nature of the community and the characteristics of the students and individuals served;
- ◇ **mandates for alternative systems,** given the differences among students, content, learning goals, employers' needs, and time and place restraints, among other factors;
- ◇ **funding constraints,** resulting in entirely different financial and staffing structures to assure continued growth and viability; and
- ◇ **innovation needs,** a place for experimental or innovative curriculum, teaching technology, and performance assessments (which can be tried out within the shadow college and adopted in traditional instructional units).

Evaluation Criteria for Shadow Colleges

At issue is *not* the existence of the shadow college but rather how it "fits" within the institution as a critical component of a comprehensive learning system for the community. Additionally, NCA needs to evaluate how shadow college activities are evaluated within the stated criteria.

There are four levels of shadow college activities, each of which should be evaluated differently:

- ◇ **Community.** How do shadow college activities serve particular needs of a community, e.g., preservation of a dominant industry, or other economic development mission? How well does the college understand the needs of the community? What research activities are college staff doing within the community to understand those needs? What community support is evidence of these actions? If there is a mission to provide leadership to community efforts, how is this mission manifested?

◇ **Institutional.** How are the efforts of a shadow college represented within the mission of the college? Among the college leadership? Are these activities specifically integrated within the regular "for-credit" instructional units? To what extent is a comprehensive learning system presented to the community? To the staff? To the students? Can a student easily move from a shadow college activity to the traditional unit? And have his/her learning recognized?

◇ **Instructional.** How are curriculum development, staff development, and other institutional issues concentrated within the shadow college? Are there regular instructional activities that are supported as the result of the shadow college (e.g., centers for integration of curriculum, special laboratories, new teaching and learning methods, new faculty recruitment)? How does the shadow college develop the capacity of the institution to more effectively deliver services in all parts of the system?

◇ **Individual.** What do we know about the individual learning outcomes of customized training customers? How do competencies get recorded and communicated? What certifications or evidence exists for the development of individual skills, lending them the portability that credit courses enjoy? How does the instruction fit into longer-term learning plans?

Patterns of Evidence

What are the means by which NCA evaluators can consider the shadow college? The following is not intended as definitive methodology but suggestive of the line of reasoning that needs to be employed. The questions to be asked focus around two major areas:

◇ How well does the community college understand its community and develop shadow college programs to meet its needs?

◇ How well are the various units of the shadow college "integrated" within the general college system, in particular as students make the transition from non-credit to credit- and degree-granting classes?

Each of these areas has a particular set of issues that needs to be addressed during an evaluation.

Understanding the Community

The college should have a written description of the community, which has been internalized by the college's leadership. This description statement should be used to justify particular program initiatives in the shadow college. For example, it may not make sense for a community college in a rural area to have extensive customized training in ISO-9000, an international quality standard for manufacturing. In brief, the shadow college can only be effective if there is a customer or client; thus, how the college defines its clients should mesh with the nature of its community.

Several activities of the shadow college should do something for the community. Writing a grant to run an adult literacy program might be entirely justified if that issue is one for which the college has determined it will take a leadership role. Developing extensive classes for police officers or fire fighters again might fit well within the specific mission of the institution. For all the activities of the shadow college, there need to be stated purposes for the college's engagement. Occasionally, although rarely, the reason may be solely entrepreneurial, i.e., to earn extra funds for the college. But even here there could be choices for the college; why one activity is pursued versus another might be asked.

Finally, when conducting the activities of the shadow college, how well has the institution applied community standards in evaluation of the outcomes? If customized training is a community need, then some measurement (e.g., the extent of jobs saved or industrial sector preserved) would be important to measure. The benchmark for the activity must be some progress made by the community and/or the targeted clients within that community.

Issues of Integration

The shadow college may be distinct in operations and activities from the traditional credit-granting side, but there is an interrelationship. The community college is one institution, and all parts must be seen as a coherent whole. Thus, how well the staff of both the shadow college and the traditional part of the college understand the functions of the other and how these may be related is important. How much are shadow college staff part of the decision-making in the institution? How much is staff made aware of activities of the shadow college? How easy is it for movement of students between the programs? How well are data kept on shadow college activities? How do the non-student parts of the programs (business office, personnel, public relations) understand the goals of the programs in the shadow college? Are the innovative programs from the shadow college eventually folded into the traditional unit? How does each area represent the other to the community? All of these are legitimate questions to raise during a site visit.

Finally, there is the community itself—the customer of the shadow college. Do they appreciate the activities of the college? How do they support these activities? Is the college filling a real need, or could it be done by someone else? What evidence is there of the community's support?

These questions take some systematic research by the team, beyond normal NCA practices. It is common practice in NCA visits for the President of the institution to hold a luncheon for "community leaders" to discuss their support for the institution. Our suggestion would be for some member of the team to obtain lists of firms served by the college and call some of the CEOs from these firms for their opinions on the college's activities. There needs to be a more systematic examination of these initiatives.

Conclusion

There may be a fundamental objection to this entire paper that needs to be taken seriously if our understanding of the role of community colleges is to be deepened. It is entirely possible to argue that the existence of the shadow college activities is a sign of institutional weakness as opposed to strengths, i.e., the growth of these activities drain revenue, staff, and attention from the central task of building credit instruction. Thus, to advocate analysis of the shadow college is to cede its existence when our goal could be to make the credit instructional unit stronger.

Our argument is that the credit traditional instruction becomes stronger and grows because of the existence of the shadow college, when its potential is maximized. Our contention is that community colleges, as learning organizations, must, in order to represent the needs of their communities, do more than offer classes for credit. This is the essence of a "community" college and what makes us different from a "junior college" or a baccalaureate-level college or university. Our core business is serving the community, as we define it, and as that community makes demands upon us. The more NCA recognizes this, the better it will be understood by our evaluators. Thus, the accreditation process will advance the evolution of learning leadership in the North Central region's community colleges.

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A Matter of Degrees: Balancing Quality with Change

Marie A. Giacomelli
Deborah Dahlen-Zelechowski

Higher education institutions are challenged by two key variables in their quest for responsiveness and, for some, even continued viability. The necessity for change is inevitable—heightened by today's fast-paced, technology-oriented, ever-changing environment. Quality is a must whether the criterion is institutional integrity, customer focus, or continuous development. Effectively achieving change and maintaining quality requires thoughtful, continuous, planned attention.

In the case of Robert Morris College, a multi-campus institution granted continued accreditation in 1991 for a ten-year period at the associate's degree level and that gained approval to add the baccalaureate degree level in 1992, the cause-and-effect relationship among the elements of responsiveness, change, and quality has always been and continues to be nearly interchangeable. Relative to those three elements, the institution's decision to change degree levels resulted in what can be well characterized by the theme of NCA's 1997 Annual Meeting, "Measuring Moving Targets."

Institutional Heritage

Since the institution was chartered in 1965 it has undergone many changes of varying magnitude with two consistent objectives: responsiveness and enhanced quality. Originally, the College mission was oriented toward transfer degrees at the associate's degree level at a single rural/residential campus. Ten years later, in order to create a service and market niche with students and employers, the College mission was refocused on the applied sciences, particularly in Business and Allied Health, at the associate's degree level; and an urban/commuter campus was acquired that extended the history of the College back to the early 1900s.

Within the subsequent ten-year period, 1975-1985, Robert Morris sought affiliation with the North Central Association, became a candidate for accreditation, and was initially accredited in 1986. The decade 1985-95 saw many changes: curriculum and degree expansion into the applied science areas of Art/Design and Technology; the addition of two strategically located commuter branch campuses within the state; the closing of the rural/residential campus; and the addition of the Bachelor in Business Administration degree at the main/urban campus. Separate approval has since been obtained to offer the bachelor's degree at the branch campuses.

The long-range plan that will take the College into the 21st century is guided by the same five basic goals proven effective in achieving the responsiveness, change, and quality of the past thirty years:

- To serve the needs of a diverse student body.
- To increase the number of students receiving an RMC degree and placement.
- To provide opportunities for professional growth for faculty and staff.
- To effectively allocate available resources for present operations and for future needs.
- To maintain an academic community of shared respect for faculty, staff, and students.

A General Model for Change

The considerations Robert Morris College addressed in each of the above-mentioned changes effected over the course of the College's institutional development are summarized in the following schematic:

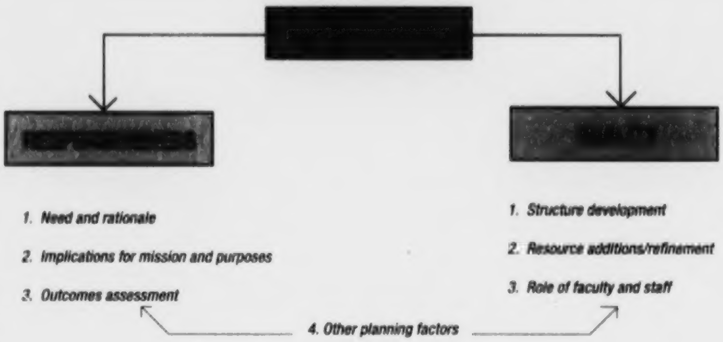
1. Need and rationale
2. Implications for mission and purposes
3. Outcomes assessment
1. Structure development
2. Resource additions/refinement
3. Role of faculty and staff
4. Other planning factors

Figure 1

Certain organizational features of Robert Morris College form a context for implementing change and assuring quality. The first feature is the centralized administrative structure that supports the multi-campus institution. The second pertains specifically to the manner in which new educational programs and student services are introduced: planning, implementation, and evaluation take place first at the main campus with subsequent extension of the program/service to the branch campuses. The third is the institution's philosophy that the quality of academic programs and the effectiveness of the teaching/learning process are the key ingredients of its own success and that of its students.

A Plan for Adding Degrees/Degree Levels/Majors

The College's plan for adding a new degree/degree level/major is one where a number of strategies are activated almost simultaneously rather than sequentially. When the institution initiated the process for adding the baccalaureate degree level, the general model for change was translated into a plan that included specific topics pertinent to that undertaking:

The Process of Change in Action

☐ Responsiveness Factors

◇ **Need and rationale.** The genesis of the baccalaureate level at Robert Morris College centered primarily on the interest by the institution's own students, a particularly diverse group in terms of ethnicity, age, academic preparation, and socioeconomic background. They entered with the goal of completing one of the several professional diploma or, at most, Associate in Applied Science degree programs offered by the College in order to master entry-level skills for their chosen career. Over the course of their studies, however, they developed confidence about their abilities to pursue a bachelor's degree. Consequently, student interest along with faculty and staff support became a powerful force in analyzing the need and rationale for the next level of academic credential.

A task force, appointed by the president and comprised of representatives from the faculty and all functional areas of the College, was charged with conducting a feasibility study about such a change. Ultimately, their recommendation for the addition of the baccalaureate degree level was substantiated by the necessary objective evidence to fulfill several criteria for new programs as established by the College's Board of Trustees.

◇ **Implications for mission/purposes.** The addition of the baccalaureate level did not conflict with the institution's mission statement, although it did provide an opportunity for the College to strengthen its statement to reflect the philosophical beliefs associated with baccalaureate education. This work coincided with other activities in the plan and process for change; namely, those related to assessment and the role of faculty and staff were integral to crafting a strengthened statement.

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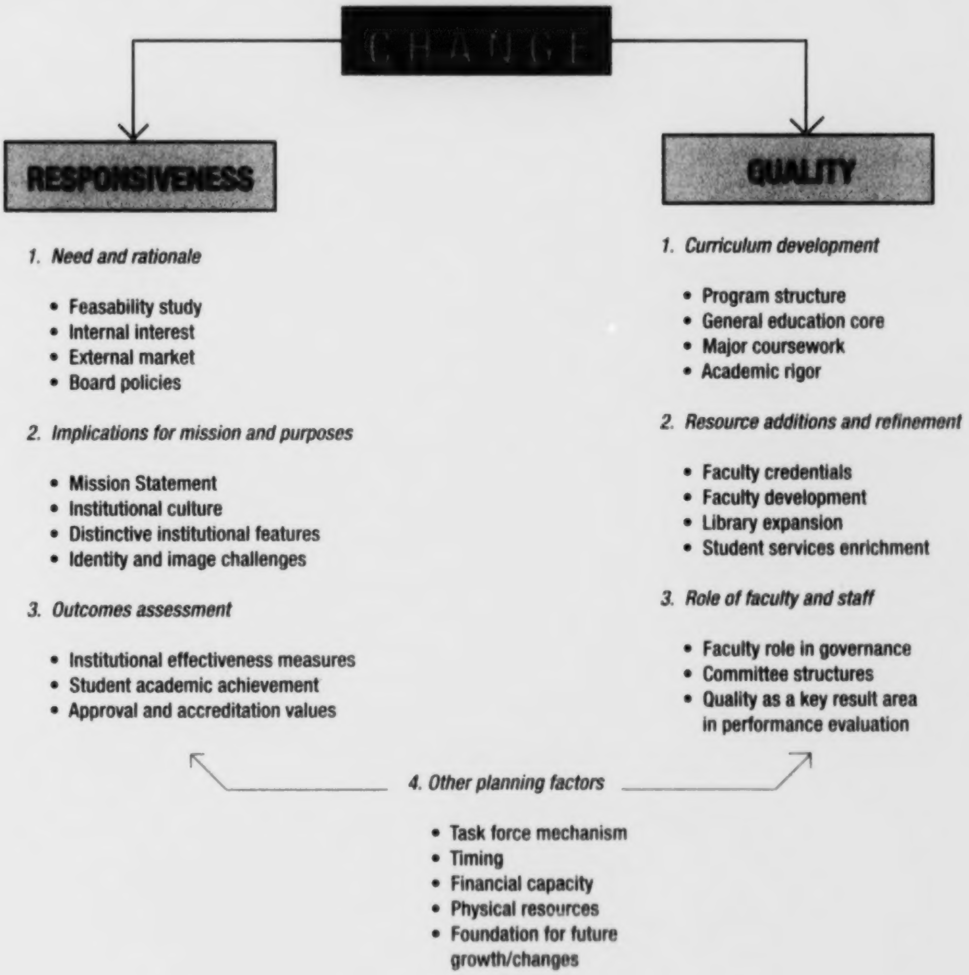

1. *Need and rationale*
   - Feasability study
   - Internal interest
   - External market
   - Board policies
2. *Implications for mission and purposes*
   - Mission Statement
   - Institutional culture
   - Distinctive institutional features
   - Identity and image challenges
3. *Outcomes assessment*
   - Institutional effectiveness measures
   - Student academic achievement
   - Approval and accreditation values

1. *Curriculum development*
   - Program structure
   - General education core
   - Major coursework
   - Academic rigor
2. *Resource additions and refinement*
   - Faculty credentials
   - Faculty development
   - Library expansion
   - Student services enrichment
3. *Role of faculty and staff*
   - Faculty role in governance
   - Committee structures
   - Quality as a key result area in performance evaluation

4. *Other planning factors*
   - Task force mechanism
   - Timing
   - Financial capacity
   - Physical resources
   - Foundation for future growth/changes

Figure 2

Through surveys of internal and external constituents, the College concluded that as it made the change in degree level and the accompanying shift in culture it would preserve its distinctive institutional features: some would remain exactly the same as they had been, and others would require some adaptation in order to accommodate the needs of the baccalaureate level. A specific example of the latter is the team structure used for serving students; since it encompasses career counseling/development, academic advisement, and guidance/mentoring, these had to be tailored to fit the upper division.

One element of responsiveness was recognized early as a challenge that would partially continue well beyond the initial implementation of the change. The identity and the image of the college as an associate degree institution has been vigorously promoted and has become well known, especially in the past two decades. Consequently, reorienting the public's awareness remains an ongoing focus for each of the College's departments. On the other hand, an erroneous perception that the College's programs are structured as an inverted curriculum has largely been overcome.

◇ **Outcomes assessment.** Evidence that the institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes has been determined in the past by various institutional performance measures (including some academic achievement ones) the College has used for a number of years.

The development of the formalized plan for assessment of student academic achievement required by NCA was initiated when the highest degree level was the associate's. However, the timing of the change

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in degree levels and the full implementation of the formalized assessment plan complemented each other. Available data proved useful to both decision-making and planning as the institution undertook change.

Evaluations by the state approval agency for new degree authority and from the most recent NCA comprehensive visit and subsequent focus visits related to the change contributed to the development and implementation phases for the new degree level. Their impact was global as would be expected, affecting all elements of responsiveness and quality.

☐ Quality Factors

The addition of the baccalaureate level has been approached as part of the College's ongoing process of institutional development. The priority initiatives shown in the plan for adding new degrees were pursued as critical elements applicable to both the existing programs and services as well as the new degree level.

◇ **Curriculum development.** Numerous academic issues emerged during the planning and implementation phases for the new degree level. Among these were questions regarding the appropriate proportion of upper-division coursework, validation of content and rigor for all curriculum components, the faculty's understanding of the difference between baccalaureate level and lower-division, job-oriented courses.

In addition, other matters had to be considered and resolved: effects that the baccalaureate level might have on the diploma and associate's degree levels; the philosophy and role of general education; the course leveling and numbering system; appropriateness of the lower division curriculum objectives/ rigor/ content to the baccalaureate level; and, the relative role of theory and application in the curriculum, to name a few.

Conclusions were reached through a variety of methods. The most productive of these were faculty task forces and collaborations with professors working in similar programs at other institutions.

◇ **Resource additions/refinement.** Adding the baccalaureate level necessitated a comprehensive examination of college policies related to the faculty position. Qualifications and credentials of faculty that fulfilled quality standards for the applied sciences associate degree level curriculum were not consistent with the needs and expectations of a bachelor's degree program or a baccalaureate institution.

Evolving from these considerations, qualifications for faculty were redefined; a standing committee on faculty credentials was established, and a continuing education plan was designed to recognize the faculty's commitment to professional development. The College's "Excellence in Teaching" initiative was broadened to include new tuition reimbursement incentives for advanced study and enhancement of the faculty position along with other perquisites.

The library and student services have both become areas that clearly reflect the institution's transition from the associate's degree to the baccalaureate level. Although library development and student services enhancement had been constant and high priority items in several budget years prior to the introduction of the upper division, they assumed expanded roles in the curriculum and in student development outside the classroom.

◇ **Role of faculty and staff.** The success experienced at Robert Morris College in adding the new degree level rests with the involvement of faculty and staff in the planning and implementation stages. Now, their ongoing involvement is contributing to program, service, and cultural enhancements based on assessed outcomes as the institution completes its transition to the baccalaureate level. Because of the change in degree levels, the College saw a need and opportunity for expanding its committee structure. As a result, the faculty's role in institutional governance has taken on new dimensions, and institutional organizational structure has been refined. The proactive posture at the committee level is both an enjoyed responsibility on the part of each group's members and a defined expectation that contributes to quality.

Other Planning Factors

All new initiatives at the College (and especially one as significant as adding the baccalaureate degree level) are based on the premise of establishing a foundation for future growth and change. The College process for achieving this premise relies heavily on an "environmental scan" that is ongoing. Once a specific idea for change or growth is targeted, a supporting committee/task force mechanism (oftentimes unique in design to the matter at hand) is identified to conduct an in-depth analysis. The topics to be addressed are virtually the same as those an NCA-accredited institution assesses during a formalized self-study cycle. Mission and purposes, resources, outcomes, ability to sustain effectiveness, and institutional integrity are the core criteria.

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A Clear Vision Statement Leads the Way to the Future

Bob G. Martin
Ken Metzger

> Haskell will "become a national center for Indian education, research and cultural programs that increase knowledge and support the educational needs of American Indian/Alaska Natives."

This paper documents some of the changes and accomplishments at Haskell Indian Nations University over the last seven years (1989 - 1996) and demonstrates that the need to change has led to a clearer Vision Statement and that a clearer Vision Statement has led to better planned changes for the future of Haskell.

Led by the vision of its Board of Regents, Haskell has begun its transition from a junior college to a four-year university. Haskell has served federally-recognized tribes since 1884. Programs and services have varied over this 113-year period in ways that reflect the changes in federal policy toward American Indians and Alaska Natives, as well as the educational needs of Indian peoples. In 1970, Haskell focused its services on associate degrees. In 1993, North Central Association accredited Haskell's first baccalaureate degree. In the same year, the Board of Regents clarified the Vision Statement to say that Haskell will "become a national center for Indian education, research and cultural programs that increase knowledge and support the educational needs of American Indian/Alaska Natives."

Seldom does a vision lead directly to its fulfillment. Instead the path winds between necessity and opportunity, between the efficient use of resources and the determination of people employed. The changes and accomplishments shared in this paper follow such a path.

Planning for Planning

☐ The Dedication and Support of Leadership Is Required to Implement Planned Change

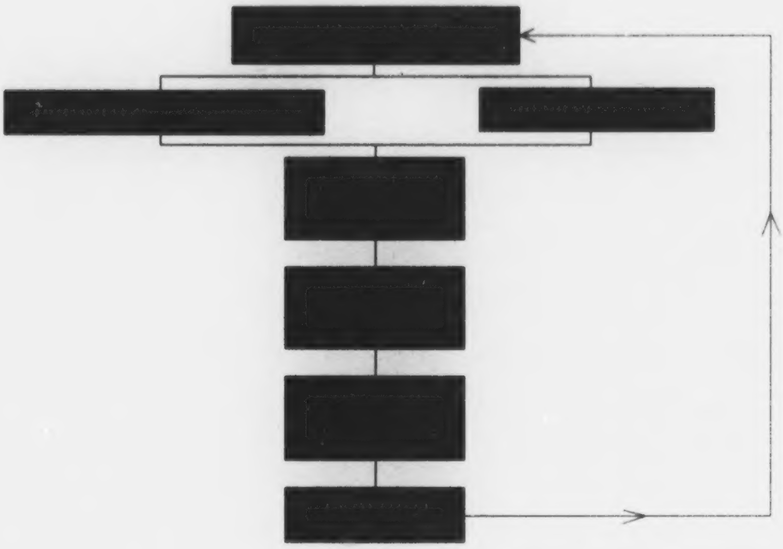
To meet the desired goal of integrating the planning process into the day-to-day operations of the school, the President of Haskell established a task force to define the needs, describe the desired outcome, and establish a process whereby this goal could be accomplished. Besides allocating the precious resources of people and time to establish the planning process (an effort that required weekly meetings, led by an outside consultant, for nearly three months), the President dedicated weekly meetings of managers and employees for more than a year to implement that process.

The Planning Process

☐ How Planned Change Affects the Mission Statement

In 1990, a flow chart was developed early in the implementation of the planning process to clarify the essential steps. As demonstrated in the flow chart, the Mission Statement preceded and directly influenced the annual action plans to accomplish that mission. But the flow chart also demonstrates how actual decisions made throughout the year can be documented, evaluated, and considered for their impact on the Mission Statement. During the first year of implementation of the planning process, the decision was made not to change the Mission Statement.

Organize for Planning



Internal and External Forces have an Impact on the Mission Statement

☐ **A Series of Events Served as a Catalyst to Re-examine the Vision for Haskell**

◇ In 1989, Haskell's source of funding for facilities required an Educational Master Plan before any new construction would be funded.

◇ In the spring of 1990, the Educational Master Plan (Haskell's Vision 2000 Goals) started Haskell in a new direction; it established a baccalaureate degree program that addressed the needs of Haskell's American Indian / Alaska Native constituents.

◇ By the fall of 1990, the establishment of these long-range goals gave a basis for knowing which direction Haskell was choosing to go, and a moderate revision of the Mission Statement was completed.

◇ In the spring of 1993, evaluation teams from the North Central Association and from the Office of Indian Education Programs (OIEP), the federal office granting Haskell the right to offer degrees in higher education, both recommended that Haskell's Mission Statement be revisited again.

— "Review the mission and goals to get a clear statement of the reason for Haskell's existence (mission), the purposes that flow from this, a view of where Haskell is going (vision) and the guiding beliefs and values for the journey (philosophy)." (OIEP Monitoring and Evaluation Report, January 18-22, 1993)

— "The College needs to address further its statement of mission and purposes so as to provide an effective baseline for determining its programs and services." (NCA's Report of a Visit, April 19-21, 1993)

◇ By the fall of 1993, the Haskell Board of Regents had made a major statement toward clarifying Haskell's reason for being, including the rejection of the use of the word "mission," by reason of historic and cultural injustices to American Indian / Alaska Native peoples. The Board also declared a name change to reflect their vision for Haskell, specifically, from Haskell Indian Junior College to Haskell Indian Nations University.

A Clear Vision Statement Leads the Way to the Future

☐ A Clear Vision Statement Makes an Impact on Both Internal and External Forces

Haskell's vision is to become a national center for Indian education, research, and cultural programs that increase knowledge and support the educational needs of American Indian/Alaska Natives (approved by Board of Regents 10/8/93).

With a clear Vision Statement guiding decisions for the future, many external forces and all internal forces are focused toward the fulfillment of that vision.

- In 1993, the Board of Regents discontinued existing programs in some vocational/technical areas, in order to focus the use of limited resources toward a baccalaureate degree in an Elementary Teacher Education Program.
- From 1993 through 1995, separate departments and programs across campus developed mission statements that coincided with the Vision Statement.
- Beginning in 1994, a process was developed to establish an instructional plan for phased development and implementation of new degrees that are consistent with the Vision Statement.
- In 1996, a set of Guiding Principles was developed to supplement the Vision Statement. A corresponding set of Institutional Vision 2005 Goals was established to be consistent with those principles and vision.
- By 1996, the Haskell Foundation continued to play its critical role by focusing on Haskell's Vision 2005 goal, namely, "diversify the financial base by increasing private and public sector sources of revenue."
- Haskell's administration continues to strengthen support for its future, through the Office of Indian Education Programs, by emphasizing Haskell's unique purpose as clarified in its Vision Statement, its Guiding Principles, and its Institutional Goals.
- In 1996, Haskell sought legislation from the United States Congress to strengthen local control over its administrative systems.

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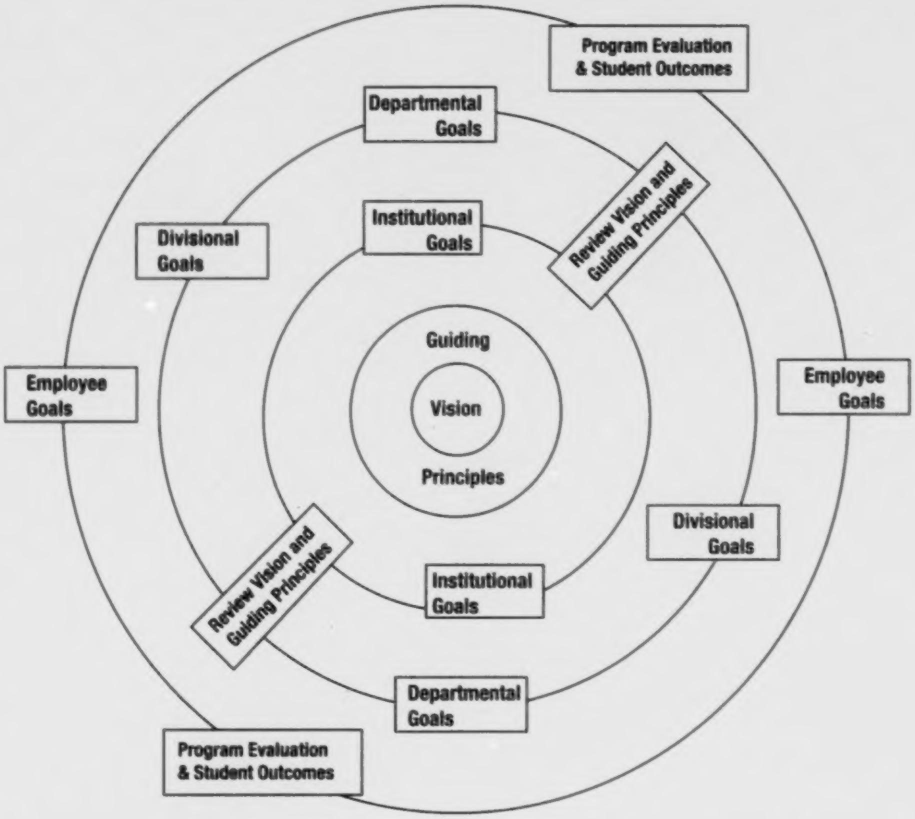
A Clear Vision Statement Leads the Way to the Future

Appendix

The following chart represents a first attempt to place the Vision Statement at the center of the dynamic process of Haskell's growth and improvement.

A Clear Vision Statement Helps Haskell Serve the Students of Indian Nations


Program Evaluation & Student Outcomes
Departmental Goals
Review Vision and Guiding Principles
Institutional Goals
Divisional Goals
Employee Goals
Guiding
Vision
Principles
Employee Goals
Divisional Goals
Institutional Goals
Review Vision and Guiding Principles
Departmental Goals
Program Evaluation & Student Outcomes

*** Students of Indian Nations ***

Students receive programs and services of the University through the efforts of individual employees

Crossing Cultures, Crossing Disciplines: Initiatives in Interdisciplinary Education

MaryAnn Janosik
Margaret A. Malmberg
Stephen A. Yachanin

Lake Erie College, a small, independent liberal arts college thirty miles east of Cleveland, is currently developing an interdisciplinary curriculum project consistent with its mission statement and its existing course offerings. The College has sought and obtained funding over a three year period to continue this project, begun as a result of North Central Association Recommendations and Objectives in the "Lake Erie College Strategic Plan 1995-2001."

Since Fall 1995, the College has made monetary and personnel commitments to promote an interdisciplinary concept on campus. The scope and magnitude of this project, while sometimes daunting in its vision, is both appropriate for a college this size and necessary to continue its development as a vital institution of higher learning.

Monies received from various sources, including the Cleveland Foundation support the project's key elements: faculty development to teach new interdisciplinary pedagogies, resources to attract new partnerships in the sciences, fine arts, humanities, and social sciences, and release time to revise existing courses and create new ones. Specific areas targeted for immediate development include the following:

- ◇ create new interdisciplinary courses
- ◇ expand and evaluate interdisciplinary majors
- ◇ train faculty in new teaching technologies
- ◇ expand internships to expand community outreach experiences
- ◇ coordinate Academic Program Abroad (APA) with course offerings

Dedicated to preparing its students for the rigors and challenges of a global society, the College community is excited about the potential to expand the academic opportunities currently offered to students through new technology and creative pedagogy.

What We Will Do

Since Fall 1995, the College has sought and received funding to begin the Interdisciplinary Initiatives Project. Funding sources include private contributions, Ohio Council for the Arts, Ohio Humanities Council, National Science Foundation, Harriet B. Storrs Foundation and The Cleveland Foundation. MaryAnn Janosik, an Assistant Professor of History at the College, was named coordinator of the interdisciplinary project in May 1996. Paul Belanger, Professor of Biology, will coordinate the Interdisciplinary Science Program; Maria de la Camara, Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences, and William Blanchard, Associate Dean for Management Studies, will assist in the overall planning of an interdisciplinary/international program.

We feel, however, that allying ourselves with only one major partner would prove detrimental to the needs of students and the college community for two reasons: 1) the need for the College to maintain its own identity without being absorbed by a larger institution; 2) the need to open our campus to a variety of options and experiences for the students without compromising the integrity of existing courses, majors, or educational philosophies.

The proposed project, "Crossing Cultures, Crossing Disciplines: Initiatives in Interdisciplinary Education," is an important component in moving the College community into the next century. The goal of the project is to create an interactive learning environment, both on and off campus, focusing on student-centered pedagogies which will prepare graduates to become contributing members of a global society. The project will allow students to experience the benefits of a small liberal arts college and, at the same time, provide the resources to take them far outside the classroom.

Implementation of the project is planned to coincide with the scheduled September 1997 opening of the new Arthur S. Holden Learning Center on campus. The Holden Center will provide conference facilities, faculty offices, traditional and smart classrooms, a long-distance learning conferencing center, and technological support services and equipment for interdisciplinary/international initiatives. Preliminary preparation includes exploring ways to integrate the College's strengths (small classes, a competent and enthusiastic teaching faculty, the tradition of interdisciplinary and internationally focused curricula as cornerstones of liberal arts education), with new technologies (long distance learning, smart classrooms, expanded academic and community partnerships), to create a fresh and stimulating, student- centered learning environment.

To help make the interdisciplinary concept a reality, the College has received and continues to seek institutional support from a variety of sources. In addition, faculty members from a variety of academic disciplines and backgrounds will be Involved In developing teaching methodologies and initiating community and academic partnerships. Because of Lake Erie Colleges size and limited physical space, it has become important to form partnerships with other academic and commonly resources.

Partnerships currently being explored include a collaboration with Rock and Roll Hall of Fame to develop interdisciplinary courses already taught in pop culture history and media studies; a recently acquired partnership with Great Lakes Theatre Festival for Spring 1997, a project designed to incorporate theatre production with oral history, writing, performance, and set design; an expansion of partnerships with Cleveland State University to continue innovative dance study; interdepartmental collaborations pairing faculty from various departments for study abroad, beginning in Summer 1998; planned off-campus sites in Costa Rica and Honduras for student exchange and scientific research, beginning in 1998; training of MBA international students to teach undergraduate courses in foreign language; and the establishment of a Bahamian Field Station on San Salvador to examine the social and economic forces at work on a small island under pressure to develop and use its natural resources.

In addition to the potential opportunities provided through new and existing partnerships, the College is also examining a range of pedagogical techniques to complement the traditional lecture format common to many courses we currently offer. Our goal is to revitalize undergraduate teaching by engaging students in an active learning process so that they may discover the links between the disciplines, and apply them to their own life experiences.

New pedagogies include using interactive computer labs and simulation exercises; exploring new quantitative and documentary sources for social research; applying case studies to multi-disciplinary analysis of complex problems; writing journals as a means of improving and organizing skills; designing courses appropriate to academic majors and student interest, develop lag student portfolios.

Assessing the goals in "Crossing Cultures, Crossing Disciplines: Initiatives to Interdisciplinary Education" will center on a set of measures designed to evaluate both process and project. Improving the quality of student learning is the purpose of this project. We will measure student achievement and retention against baseline data.

The anticipated impact of the interdisciplinary initiatives project will reach 100% of our student Population over the next three years as well as 75% of the college faculty. Students will be exposed to the new initiatives throughout the core curriculum and in their respective majors. New approaches to content and pedagogy will allow students to adopt new attitudes, master skills, and acquire knowledge emphasizing the relationships among disciplines, This, in turn, will strengthen critical thinking and problem solving competencies. Assessing the college's success will be done by integrating the use of grant monies, faculty response through Interdisciplinary projects, the 1999 North Central Association Evaluation, and with the institutional goals of increased enrollment, a continued balanced budget, and student evaluations.

Beyond these criteria, the interdisciplinary initiatives project will serve as a model for other small colleges who want to introduce pedagogical innovation without overextending their resources.

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Chapter II

Processes for Improvement

Measuring Moving Targets...◆...◆...◆

102nd Annual Meeting of the North Central Association
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
April 19-22, 1997 • Hyatt Regency Chicago

Targeting Customer Satisfaction: Use of Continuous Quality Improvement

Denise D. Wilson

There are probably very few individuals who have not heard of the terms "continuous quality improvement (CQI)" or "total quality management (TQM)." In fact, just the mention of CQI can send some people into an anxiety attack. But why should CQI cause such a response? Perhaps it is because those individuals have not actually been involved in the use of CQI methodology. They may be basing their response on a lack of information about what CQI is and what it can do for an organization.

CQI is not a new concept. Its roots lie in the manufacturing and business sectors, where companies use CQI to find ways to improve their products or services to better compete with other companies in their market. The use of CQI has continued to spread, finding its way into government, health care, and even to the world of academia.

Ted Marchese (1991), in his article TQM Reaches the Academy," summarizes the following 12 key characteristics of the quality improvement process.

1. **A focus on quality.** If they are to thrive, institutions today must have quality as their primary goal. Considering the time, effort, and financial resources required to obtain an education, it should come as no surprise to academicians that students and their families expect a quality education.
2. **Customer-driven.** An institution must determine just who its customers are and work toward meeting their needs. This is often difficult for academicians to accept, since students, for example, have not been viewed, historically, as "customers."
3. **Continuous improvement.** It is easy for an institution to become comfortable with its status and to think that no changes are needed. In today's world, however, an institution that is unwilling to evaluate its processes objectively is unlikely to prosper. What works for an institution today may be inappropriate for its functioning in the near future. Institutions must be open to change if they are to continue to exist.
4. **Making processes work better.** The functioning of an institution involves numerous processes, which are often interconnected. CQI focuses on evaluating these processes through data collection; then determining and implementing process improvements.
5. **Extending the mindset.** When an institution has a relatively narrow mindset, it may consider only the processes within the institution itself as having an impact on its quality. By extending its mindset, an institution looks beyond its own walls to evaluate other factors/processes that influence its quality.
6. **The discipline of information.** An essential component of the CQI process is data collection. When CQI methodology is accepted and implemented by an institution, collected data are freely shared among the individuals involved in the processes being evaluated and among the customers of the institution.
7. **Eliminate rework.** Rework basically represents time spent fixing mistakes. Often problems with institutional processes result in mistakes or wasted time and effort. By evaluating and improving the processes, mistakes can be eliminated, not only in the process being studied, but also in associated processes.
8. **Teamwork.** The thought of yet "another committee" can lead to resistance among people in an institution. However, CQI uses the "team" approach, in which team members are the people most knowledgeable about and involved in the process. Ownership of the process being studied facilitates active involvement by the CQI team members.

9. **Empowering people.** When there are problems in an institution, it is natural to blame an individual. It has been found, however, that the majority of times, the problem lies in the process, not the people. CQI encourages involvement of the people and empowers them to determine how the process can be improved.

10. **Training and recognition.** The use of CQI methodology requires that team members possess skills in being a team member and in problem-solving. Training programs are often needed to ensure the presence of these essential skills.

11. **Vision.** The CQI team must be able to understand and articulate the vision of the institution. The team cannot determine appropriate changes in processes if its members are uncertain about where the institution is headed.

12. **Leadership.** The success of CQI efforts lies not only in the effectiveness of the CQI team, but also in the leadership of the institution. The leader must believe in, and feel comfortable with, the CQI process as well as the time, effort, and ultimately, money that may be required by the team's work and the process improvements it recommends.

Mennonite College of Nursing (MCN) has a strong reputation for providing a quality nursing education. The institution realizes that in order to maintain this reputation and to remain competitive in its market, it must be willing and ready to make necessary changes. Toward this aim, MCN provided training of its faculty, staff, and administration in the concept and methodology of CQI. During this training, participants developed a list and prioritized processes that might benefit from study by a CQI team, and the first CQI team was formed.

Initially, the process to be studied was scheduling. However, once the team was formed and began to meet regularly, it found that the process actually had three components: advisement, scheduling, and registration. Since these processes are so closely related and intertwined, the team decided to study all three.

The team consisted of individuals who represented the three processes: the Director of Student Affairs, who was responsible for the academic advisement process; the Dean of Academic Affairs, responsible for scheduling; the Registrar, responsible for registration; the Secretary to the Registrar; and three faculty members. A team facilitator from the Human Resources Department served as the "expert" regarding CQI; however, the team was led by the Dean of Academic Affairs.

The work of the team took approximately one year. During this time, activities included brainstorming within the group; data collection from numerous sources, including students, faculty, and administration; determination of the sources of variation within the processes; deciding what kinds of problems needed to be addressed immediately through "quick fixes"; and determining which improvements to be implemented on a more "permanent" basis.

The work of the group resulted in the development of a rather detailed policy, incorporating the three processes that have been implemented successfully. Equally important was the communication that occurred among team members, which resulted in an appreciation for each person's role in the various processes. The positive results occurred with a minimal outlay of resources.

An important part of the CQI process is the "C" for "continuous." No process is perfect or even close to perfect forever. Data collection must continue; processes must be changed to maintain quality. The evaluation of these processes is a part of Mennonite College of Nursing's Plan for Institutional Assessment, so that a continuous check on the appropriateness of any new policy takes place.

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Using Shared Learning Roundtables to Understand Constituent Needs

Vince Linder
Tom Sullivan

Cleary College is a private four-year college of business with a 114-year history as a baccalaureate institution of higher education. Cleary offers baccalaureate degrees in management, accounting, marketing, and information systems at its two campuses, in Howell and Ypsilanti, Michigan. The college's students are primarily adults who work while completing their degrees. Cleary emphasizes practical application of business theory and enjoys an excellent reputation among area employers for preparing graduates who succeed in the workplace.

For the past three years Cleary College has been using Shared Learning Roundtables to gather information and to better understand the constituents served by the college. Our experience has been that this innovative method, when combined with more traditional methods of external environmental assessment, can be a powerful tool for improvement, planning, and coping with outside changes that have an impact on the college.

Keeping Up with Change

Pressures from rapidly changing conditions in the external environment challenge our ability to improve institutional effectiveness. If we could know more about changing constituent needs and emerging trends, the task of improvement could become more manageable. But measuring this moving target, though more essential today than it has ever been in the past, is not easily done.

A traditional approach to measuring external change is to use some type of environmental scanning. Most methods for environmental scanning produce large volumes of data that are difficult to interpret. Also it seems that as we strive for objective measures and statistical significance, there is some danger that we will end up concluding only the obvious or supporting some predetermined conclusion because of flawed research design. Environmental scans add to our knowledge, but they alone are not enough.

Use of advisory groups is another common method of learning about changing constituent needs. Employers and other constituents are convened periodically and asked for their reaction to or opinion on topics of interest to the college. Our experience with this approach has been mixed. We find participants start with enthusiasm and good intentions, but in time their contribution diminishes. We have concluded that the one-sided nature of this approach, the sole purpose being to aid the college, eventually undermines effectiveness. Without a "win-win" exchange, advisory groups can become more work to maintain than their value justifies, except possibly for purposes other than gaining knowledge.

The Concept of Shared Learning Roundtables

A Shared Learning Roundtable is a method for gathering and understanding constituent needs and improvement opportunities. This approach borrows methods used by anthropologists to study cultures, methods that can lead to deeper understanding resulting from a different kind of data gathering. Anthropologists argue that to understand a people and their culture fully the researcher must experience the culture as a member of the group. Only "living the experience" can give deeper knowledge and understanding. The Shared Learning Roundtable uses this same concept.

A Shared Learning Roundtable is a group formed with specially selected participants who represent important constituent groups served by the college in the greater community. The purpose of the group is to share learning experiences that will benefit all members by solving problems about issues of interest to each member.

Participants gain because they can ask the group for help with a problem of importance to their own organization. The college gains in two ways, first, from getting advice on issues of its own concern, and second, from participating in problem solving directed toward the concerns of others in the group, which provides valuable understanding of the difficulties others face in their world.

The concept of Shared Learning Roundtables had its roots in Cleary College's recognition that, fundamentally, the college was a business enterprise and, that like our business constituents from the broader community, we faced operational challenges common to most businesses at various stages of their growth. Although we educators often pride ourselves on being on the "cutting edge" of business theory and implementation, we realized that much could be learned by sharing common experiences—both in terms of improving the College's operational sophistication and in terms of identifying common needs of the business community that might help us shape academic programs and services to offer employers with better skilled employees and potential employees.

How Shared Learning Roundtables Work

The Roundtable program was designed initially to bring together a small number of local business executives, representing separate and distinct industries, to meet once a month in a cooperative effort to help each other with their problems and opportunities. Participants in the roundtable program were restricted to owners/partners or top decision-makers who contributed to the day-to-day operations of their businesses. During the first year of the program, a local Chamber of Commerce assisted in the identification of potential participants.

Initial ground rules for the program included the following:

1. No more than one decision maker per company could participate.
2. To ensure confidentiality, guests and substitutes were allowed only with prior agreement of the group.
3. Each roundtable member was expected to encourage the growth, solve problems, and discuss concerns of other group members.
4. Meetings were structured to include a host/facilitator and a recorder each month (rotating assignments).
5. The roundtables were to have a mix of business types, years in business, and size. Participants were expected to have at least two years of executive management experience in their present business.
6. The roundtables were not to exceed a dozen members.
7. The roundtable meetings were not intended to be a platform for selling.
8. Each member was expected to commit to regular attendance and was not to miss two consecutive meetings.
9. Each member was expected to host the group at their business (or use the Chamber offices if this was not possible).

The initial membership of the group included the president of a small business consulting firm, a partner in an accounting firm, a bank president, the owner of a sign making shop, the co-president of a title insurance company, the president of an architectural consulting firm, a special agent/owner of an insurance firm, the president of a travel bureau, the owner of a national franchise, and the CEO of Cleary College.

As with any forming group, operational improvements were made during the first year of the program; some members found the group did not meet their needs. Specifically, three members dropped from the group; they were replaced by the owner of a furniture store, a restauranteur, a small auto supply manufacturer, and the COO of a publishing company. Additionally, the group decided to combine the facilitating and recording role and to rotate this assignment on a quarterly rather than a monthly basis. At the close of each quarter, participants were also invited to identify "key" issues for discussion during the next quarter, and the agenda was standardized to allow for "hot" topics to be placed before the group at the outset of each meeting. The college became the host site for the meetings, and its library resources (paper and electronic) were made available to all members.

During the past three years, the Shared Learning Roundtable has focused on a number of issues unique to individual members, but also found "common" concerns that received attention from all members. Among these were, for example, customer satisfaction, market positioning, creative and consistent ways to generate referrals, business planning, strategic planning, employee ownership, benchmarking, hiring entry level employees, keeping employees, increasing sales volume, balancing personal and business demands, and succession planning. Interestingly, as the group considered the use of external consultants and/or advisory boards, there was unanimous agreement that the Roundtable itself served most effectively and should be the primary advisory group.

The college president has participated in the roundtable program for the past three years. In so doing, the college has improved its operations through insight into challenges common to other businesses, gained friends and donors through the relationship that emerged when we were able to provide advice and counsel to colleagues from the business community, and most importantly, heard first hand what the business employer felt her and his needs were so the college could include that perspective in curricular design and student preparation.

Building a Shared Learning Roundtable Program

In addition to the original roundtable experience, the college has begun to shape other roundtables at other levels within the organization. Additionally, since Cleary College maintains campuses in two separate and fairly distinctive counties within southeast Michigan, we have chosen to form these interactive groups within each of our county communities.

Several factors should be considered when forming roundtable groups:

- **Role.** Our experience seems to indicate that choosing group members who have similar functional roles in their respective organizations improves communication. Functional areas of product, sales, and management offer a good starting point. For example, a group might include central administrators, or sales and marketing managers, or product design or production managers. Select individuals who have similar roles and, therefore, some common interests and concerns.
- **Level.** Select roundtable members who have similar levels of responsibility. Combine CEOs with CEOs, executive level managers with executive level managers, and so forth.
- **Size.** We think that roundtables work best if the participating organizations are of similar size. What seems most important is that members see their challenges within their respective organizations as being similar to those faced by the other members.
- **Type.** The organizations selected to make up the roundtable should be from different industries and be different types. Mix profit with non-profit, governmental with non-governmental, retail with manufacturing, or service providers with product producers. In this sense, diversity within the group is a key factor influencing its success.

Results

Our experiment with these roundtables has had a number of positive outcomes; some have been things we had hoped to accomplish, while others have been pleasant yet unexpected. There have been no negative results to date. The effort has helped us to answer many questions about what our most important constituents think and how they deal with the problems they face. The high quality consultation we have received and the community friend building outcomes from the venture were not primary goals, but they turned out to be significant benefits.

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Incorporating Staff Development Activities to Increase the Qualifications of Underqualified Faculty

Daniel J. Phelan

Institutional Overview and Context

Western Nebraska Community College (WNCC) is a small, rural, public community college located in the panhandle of Nebraska. Its catchment area covers 19,000 square miles and a population of 91,000. The College employs 69 full-time and 150 part-time faculty, operates within a $10.2 million dollar general budget, and enrolls approximately 3,900 students annually (2,600 FTE). The campus is located in Scottsbluff with a population of approximately 23,000. In addition, the College operates attendance centers in Alliance and Sidney, each with populations of 5,000 and 6,000 respectively.

Cheyenne, Wyoming is one and one-half hours distant, and Denver, Colorado, is nearly four hours from Scottsbluff. In addition, the state capital of Nebraska, Lincoln, is a six hour drive from the campus. Given these demographic and institutional characteristics, minimal cultural and cosmopolitan opportunities for residents in the region, as well as a limited hiring budget, it is difficult for WNCC to recruit and retain appropriately degreed faculty to the area. Consequently, the College has responded through a significant commitment to staff development for faculty to support its instructional program.

Faculty Development Activities

Staff development activities are nothing new to higher education circles, nor the business and industrial community. Recent reports from the United States Department of Labor suggest that the average company in this country spends approximately two to three percent of its total budget on employee training and re-training. In higher education, staff development contributions are slightly less, in a range of one to two percent of their general fund budget.

At Western Nebraska Community College, the commitment to faculty development has been very high. This commitment is due, in part, to the College's rural location, and the difficulty the College has in attracting qualified and appropriately degreed faculty needed to provide the most current and complete education to students. The College continues to expand upon its pledge for ongoing faculty development as demonstrated through creation and expansion of many programs. To be sure, General Institutional Requirement 9 and Criterion Two are quite clear regarding the academic preparation of higher education faculty, as well as the type of credentials that they must possess in order to teach in at a particular degree-awarding level.

Each year, WNCC expends approximately $119,000 or 1.2 percent on faculty development alone. These funds represent allocations from the College's general fund, released time, as well as staff development grants obtained from State and Federal sources. These funds are used both as a means to assist under-degreed/under-credentialed faculty in reaching the requirement, and as a resource for degreed faculty to remain current in their discipline, or obtain an additional credential or certification. A brief sampling of these programs is presented below:

- ◇ **Pursuing credit courses for a degree/certification.** Faculty may choose to pursue additional education related to their discipline during the course of any given semester. In cases where faculty are hired without all of the educational experiences/certifications necessary, released-time/re-assigned-time may be given so that the faculty member can attend the needed classes. The instructor has the option to have the College pay for the tuition, in which case he/she cannot use it for salary movement. Conversely, the faculty member can opt to pay for the tuition costs themselves, which can ultimately affect their base salary upon the attainment of 12 semester credit hours.

◇ **Instructional division funding.** Each year, during the College's budgeting process, each faculty FTE is equated to approximately $400. This provides seed money to each division for ongoing training of the faculty. Some divisions choose to pool these funds to send a few faculty to training events, rotating the faculty members that participate each year. In other cases, the division faculty may choose to apply this money with other resources they can obtain (e.g., grant funds, institutional funds, personal resources, etc.).

◇ **Staff development funding (educational services).** In order to access these competitively-based funds, a faculty member is required to submit an Individual Personal/Professional Development Plan (PPDP) to the Division Chair and to the Dean of Instruction. The PPDP is part of each faculty member's instructional portfolio. Twice each year, a committee is formed, comprised of peer faculty, in order to evaluate the candidate's application. The committee, chaired by the Dean of Instruction, considers the requests in light of specific criteria including: recency of the last staff development award, type of request, institutional benefit, and instructional priority.

◇ **New program and course development.** As new programs and classes are developed at the College, every attempt is made to "up-skill" existing faculty through focused training activities. Using special program set-aside funds, faculty are encouraged to take additional classes in order to obtain the necessary knowledge base, as well as any related certifications.

For the most part, new programs require the addition of new, discipline-specific faculty. However, for some of the new vocational/technical programs, the College may be left with no choice other than to hire a competent and certified technician, yet one who does not possess a degree in keeping with GIR #9 requirements. On those occasions, a specific educational plan is laid out, in advance of the faculty hiring, and is agreed to, up-front, by the potential new employee. The execution of the plan becomes the responsibility of the division chair, working in concert with the new faculty member.

◇ **Spring and fall assemblies.** At the onset of each academic term, the College sets aside five days for faculty and staff. Specifically, the first three days are reserved for staff and faculty development, with the remaining two days for faculty preparation activities.

For each of the assemblies, a speaker is brought in to present a specific topic ranging from instructional technologies to teaching and learning to critical thinking. In addition, a smorgasbord approach is used to provide specific workshop and training activities. Faculty and staff can choose to learn and expand their skills in areas such as Multimedia, AS 400, Student Advising, CAD, GroupWise, Microsoft Office, and using the College's Distance Learning System (DLS).

◇ **NISOD annual conference.** Each year two faculty members are selected by their peers to attend the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) Conference at the University of Texas at Austin. This is a great opportunity for attending faculty to learn from master teachers in order to enhance their instructional skills.

◇ **Human resource development funding.** In addition to the aforementioned staff development funding sources, the College's Human Resource Office also provides funds for College-directed, legally-required, or special staff development programs. In the past, these funds have been used to provide Hazardous Material Training, Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) training, institutional planning, and related topics.

◇ **NCCCA Institute and annual conference.** In addition to campus mentoring activities for Division Chairs, the Educational Services Office provides funding for new Division Chairs to attend the National Community College Chair Academy, which is sponsored by Mesa Community College in Phoenix. In addition, for chairpersons of long-standing, the Office provides funding for each chair to participate in the NCCCA Institute, a year-long program beginning with an intensive one-week program in a retreat setting. During the year that follows, the chair is mentored by an Institute Mentor, as well as a representative from his/her home institution. The chair has specific project assignments, and is required to maintain a log of his/her activities. The year concluded with an additional week-long retreat.

- **Higher education partnerships for degree attainment.** WNCC has also partnered with Chadron State College and the University of Nebraska to provide specific courses, as well as coursework leading to a degree, for our under-degreed faculty. By using distance-mediated technologies, in addition to some limited on-campus course work, faculty are able to make reasonable progress toward degree completion. In each instance, the College is willing to provide some release time for the faculty to pursue the additional certification and/or degree.
- **State and Federal Grants.** The College applies for both State and Federal Grants to provide additional funding for faculty development and training. Indeed, much of the grant funding received to-date has made many staff development activities possible.
- **Staff development days.** Each semester, the College sets aside one day for faculty and staff development. Typically, these days are used to bring in a presenter on topics such as outcomes assessment. In addition, numerous workshops are established to provide skill training on a particular subject.

Challenges Associated with Staff Development for Faculty

Perhaps the most significant difficulty in working with under-degreed faculty in obtaining the appropriate credential involves faculty unions. At WNCC, newly hired faculty obtain "continuing-contract" status (i.e., tenure) after a period of two years. The College's legal counsel maintains that the administration has the right to require additional education and credentials for only the two-year period. After that, the obligation of the faculty member to pursue the degree/credential is non-existent. A few exceptions exist in this arrangement: it assumes that the instructional program continues to remain viable; and the faculty member is qualified to teach in any new courses that may emerge in his/her discipline.

Despite this significant hurdle, most faculty are willing to work with the administration to acquire the additional education. For those faculty who do not want to pursue a degree appropriate to their instructional area, the College must "wait them out" until retirement or when they choose to move to another locale. Consequently, great care must be given in the faculty search process to fully exhaust all possibilities for faculty with the necessary degree level.

Conclusions

Hiring good qualified faculty is absolutely essential whenever possible. Unfortunately, especially in rural areas, finding academically prepared faculty may not always be possible. Thus, it becomes necessary, as an intermediate step, to locate faculty with a demonstrated knowledge and ability to teach a particular class, and then utilize staff development activities to increase the qualification level of these underqualified faculty.

Clearly, allocating as many dollars as possible for staff development is even more vital if a qualified faculty member cannot be located. Depending on your institution, union involvement, or other related variables, you may not be able to require faculty to obtain the necessary certifications/credentials. In these cases, it is best to establish a "professional contract," via a faculty development plan, and get the buy-in early.

The college's commitment to faculty development must never waver. To do so would be to seriously jeopardize the involvement of the under-degreed faculty. In addition, faculty development must regularly appear on faculty evaluations, division and academic affairs meeting agendas, as well as in the college's strategic plan. If the college is to take the various faculty qualification aspects of Criterion Two and GIR 9 seriously, then faculty development strategies must be a serious and consistent priority in the budget development of the college.

Daniel J. Phelan is Executive Vice President of Educational and Student Services, Western Nebraska Community College, Scottsbluff, Nebr.

A Continuous Improvement Performance Appraisal Process

Harvey Link
Gloria Dohman
Gary Henrickson

North Dakota State College of Science (NDSCS) is a member of the North Dakota University System (NDUS) serving North Dakota and the surrounding states. It is an accredited, state-supported, open door, two-year comprehensive college. The college offers more than 80 programs in technologies, health, business, and college transfer to approximately 2,600 students per year. Joyce Lain Kennedy's Career Book lists NDSCS as one of "a mere handful of residential vo-tech institutions that…are considered on a par with state colleges where [students] live on campus and receive comprehensive training in job skills" (313-14).

However, despite its record of excellence, NDSCS has not been immune from pressure for more accountability from the public, the media, and governing agencies. This public pressure often takes the form of questioning the value of tenure and questioning institutions' commitments to assuring that employees fulfill job expectations.

Driving Forces

By the fall of 1995, a number of driving forces had converged and led to the decision to review and revise NDSCS's performance appraisal process. The most important of these "drivers" are listed below:

◇ **SBHE Policy and Expectations.** During the early 1990s, the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education (SBHE) re-emphasized the system policy that called for an appraisal process that developed employees and worked towards continuous improvement.

◇ **Commitment to Continuous Improvement.** In the summer of 1991, NDSCS accepted the North Dakota University System's challenge to adopt the principles of continuous quality improvement. Since that time, the college has continued to foster this philosophy.

◇ **NCA Self-Study Report.** In 1991, the college conducted a NCA self-study that identified the need to improve the college's performance appraisal system.

◇ **NDSCS Strategic Plan.** The 1993 NDSCS Strategic Plan included the goal to provide professional development and continuous improvement opportunities for faculty and staff.

◇ **Faculty Tenure and Ranking Processes.** In 1994, the NDSCS Tenure committee revised its Tenure and Faculty Ranking processes to include extensive evidence that an appropriate appraisal process has been followed.

◇ **Deficiencies in Current System.** In 1995, an in-depth review of the current evaluation system revealed that it was not comprehensive in nature, was often misunderstood, was not consistently used, and was frequently mistrusted.

Process Development

In September 1995, a cross-functional team was appointed by the President to research performance appraisal issues and options and to bring a proposal to the Campus Council. The ten-member team consisted of two faculty members, two classified employees, one manager, one vice-president, one dean, the Coordinator of Professional

Development, the Coordinator of Assessment and Quality, and the Director of Human Resources. In addition, a facilitator was appointed.

Based upon the team's research, a realization developed that an institution should not undertake performance appraisal only because of outside pressure. Rather the team concluded that performance appraisal has become necessary for survival if an institution hopes to maximize its primary resource of human potential. Thus, the team committed itself to bring forth a positive and comprehensive performance appraisal plan that would assist the college to grow as an institution through the individual development of employees.

Early in the process, the team focused its efforts by constructing an affinity diagram that included all the concepts and ideas that needed to be addressed. The items were put in sequential order and a timeline assigned. This diagram was invaluable to the team and literally became the road map that was followed. The diagram that follows this article reflects the refined process. More detail regarding major concepts is provided below:

☐ Data Gathering

In analyzing the current situation, the team determined that it needed to collect data concerning the following three issues:

- ◇ What are we doing at NDSCS?
- ◇ What are others doing?
- ◇ What are the NDUS and SBHE expectations?

The team realized that it needed to know the appropriate steps of the current process and the employee perceptions of how well it was or was not working. Except for the Human Resources Director, the team members had limited knowledge of performance appraisal processes. Thus several activities took place to provide background and to educate the team on current theories, objectives, and practices related to performance appraisal. A literature review was conducted and materials analyzed. The team also arranged for presentations from the State Board of Higher Education, North Dakota State University, and a consultant from the health sector. A conference session comparing summative to continuous improvement strategies and the opinions received from eleven employee focus groups provided invaluable information.

☐ Strategy to Inform Campus

The team identified common issues and concerns of NDSCS employees, the various methods that could be used, and the perspectives from which appraisal could be approached. The findings were shared with the entire staff through campus-wide meetings, and staff input was sought at various stages of development throughout the process.

☐ Philosophy Statement Developed

By December 1995, the team was at a decision point. Which approach toward performance appraisal would be taken, summative or formative? After lengthy discussion, the team agreed that the concepts of a formative performance appraisal system support continuous improvement and the college's commitment to a quality culture. These concepts became the philosophy statement of performance appraisal. Before the team went further, this statement was shared with all employee councils for feedback. Suggestions were considered, revisions made, and the statement sent to Campus Council for adoption. The philosophy statement became the blueprint for the development of the rest of the process, including a Performance Appraisal Standard that became part of the NDSCS Quality Standards.

☐ Instruments/Documents Developed

The culture at NDSCS supports the belief that when employees are hired they want to do a good job. This performance appraisal system is designed to help provide feedback so individuals can be more successful in their positions. The team believed that quality performance appraisals need to be based upon known and objective standards. Whims, unwritten agendas, and unspoken or unclear expectations are sure to cause confusion, inconsistency, and misunderstandings between employees and supervisors. Therefore, the following instruments and documents were made central to the performance appraisal process:

- ◇ **Position descriptions.** Position descriptions may vary greatly in the way they are written. Some may be quite general, others quite specific; but the responsibilities should be current and clearly understood by both employee and supervisor. The institution (employer) has the ultimate right to assign responsibilities; however, doing so in consultation with the employee is the most desirable manner.
- ◇ **Quality standards.** The college has adopted and established a set of Quality Standards as a means of stating "the accepted way we operate." These standards cover the general expectations of all campus employees. The standards at NDSCS cover eight areas: Management, Performance Appraisal, Communication, Customer Contact, Professionalism, Confidentiality, Instruction, and Teamwork.
- ◇ **Previous performance appraisal.** The employee's most recent appraisal is reviewed and used as a basis upon which to build. Any areas identified for improvement as well as last year's goals become focal points for the feedback process.
- ◇ **Feedback.** Various feedback sources are needed for a quality appraisal. It is important to determine how others, in addition to the supervisor, perceive an individual's work. This is frequently called 360 degree feedback and is collected from those whom the employee's work affects: students, coworkers, campus visitors, etc. Methods of collecting the feedback vary greatly. It is recommended that feedback be collected throughout the year as a continuous process.
- ◇ **Employee growth plan.** Appropriate professional development activities are discussed after the performance appraisal instrument is completed. This instrument helps the employee and supervisor plan improvement activities, such as classes, seminars, workshops, as well as participation and involvement on campus, professional service, and awareness of community involvement.

☐ Training Plan

The focus groups and discussions with employees revealed that the former performance appraisal process didn't work as well as it could have because people didn't understand it, and many supervisors had little or no training in conducting performance appraisals. The team determined that training would be an integral part of implementing the new performance appraisal process.

Three hours of training were designed for all employees during which the development of philosophy and process were reviewed. Supervisors received an additional four-hour segment on coaching to assist them in the implementation of their changing role from manager to coach. The sessions were interactive, using the techniques of brainstorming, role playing, and plus-delta. In order to help employees visualize the process, two videos were made and shown during training. One video was made by faculty and the other made by support staff, depicting typical performance appraisal processes.

☐ Final Approval Process

The new Performance Appraisal Process was presented to employee groups and feedback was solicited. Suggestions were again considered by the team before the final process was taken to the Campus Council for approval.

Lessons Learned

- ◇ The process followed is critical.
- ◇ Construction of the affinity diagram becomes the process road map and provides focus for the project.
- ◇ The philosophy statement becomes the pivotal piece upon which the plan is developed.
- ◇ Once the philosophy statement is written and agreed upon, the development of the performance appraisal instruments is fairly straightforward.
- ◇ Getting feedback from the employees at various stages during the development process and incorporating their ideas is fundamental to final acceptance and implementation.
- ◇ The training plan gives supervisors and employees confidence in how the process will be conducted. The feedback process needs to be clearly explained, as it may be the most radical departure from previous methods.
- ◇ Utilization of the Employee Growth Plan provides for the development of the employee and brings the performance appraisal process full circle.
- ◇ The performance appraisal process opens lines of communication between employees and supervisors.
- ◇ Job descriptions must be kept current.
- ◇ Employees find written comments more valuable than numerical ratings.
- ◇ The new performance appraisal process is time consuming but the results are worth the effort.

Conclusion

The North Dakota State College of Science is committed to being the best possible institution it can be, and this success hinges upon the personnel at the college. Thus, NDSCS has attempted to respond to the issues involved in performance appraisal in a proactive manner. This process supports the college's commitment to continuous improvement and the development of human resources. Effective performance appraisal will ensure that NDSCS continues to maximize its most important resource—its people.

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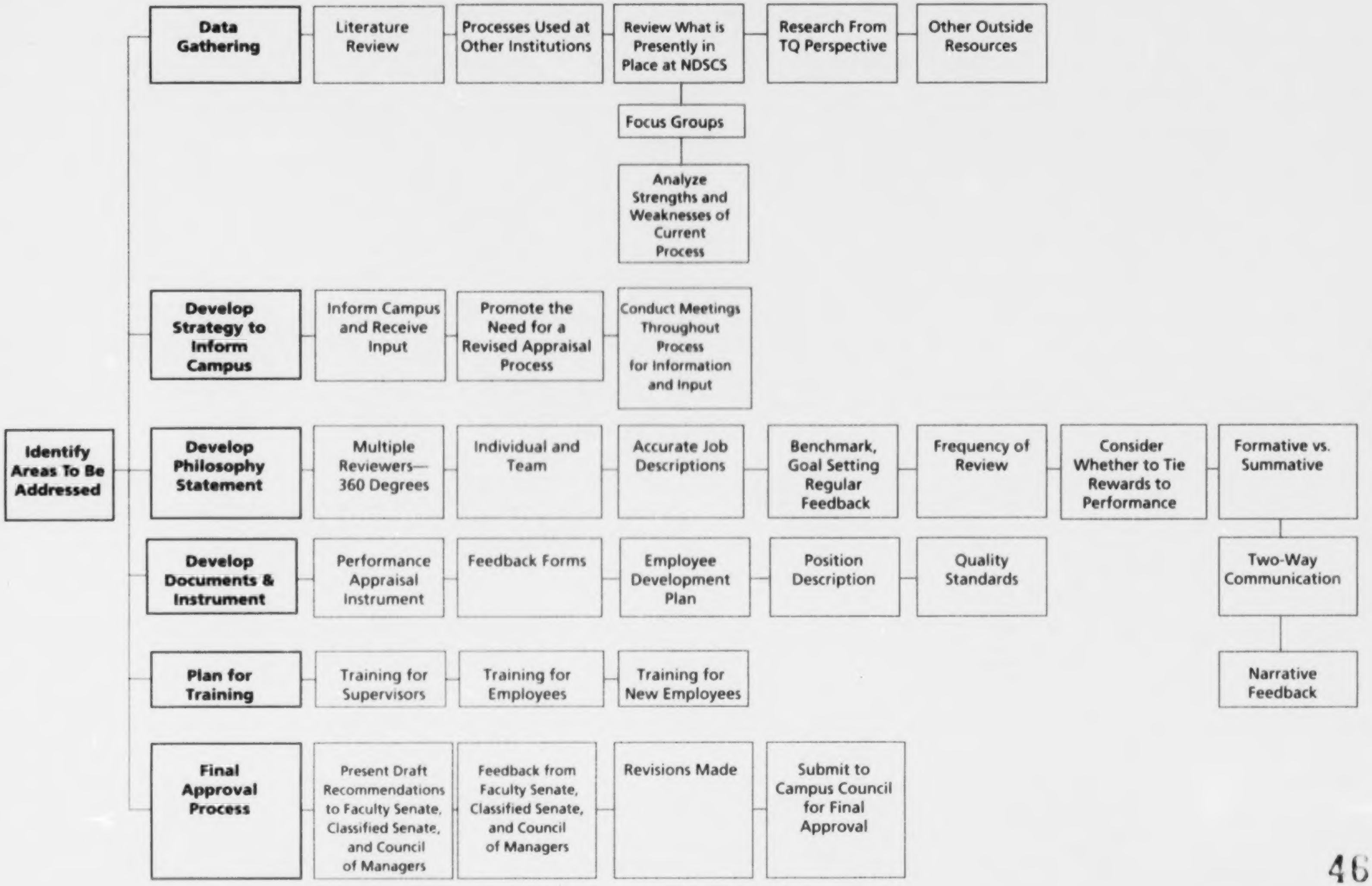
Appendix

A Continuous Improvement Performance Appraisal Process

North Dakota State College of Science
Performance Appraisal Development Process


Identify Areas To Be Addressed
Data Gathering
Literature Review
Processes Used at Other Institutions
Review What is Presently in Place at NDSCS
Research From TQ Perspective
Other Outside Resources
Focus Groups
Analyze Strengths and Weaknesses of Current Process
Develop Strategy to Inform Campus
Inform Campus and Receive Input
Promote the Need for a Revised Appraisal Process
Conduct Meetings Throughout Process for Information and Input
Develop Philosophy Statement
Multiple Reviewers—360 Degrees
Individual and Team
Accurate Job Descriptions
Benchmark, Goal Setting Regular Feedback
Frequency of Review
Consider Whether to Tie Rewards to Performance
Formative vs. Summative
Two-Way Communication
Narrative Feedback
Develop Documents & Instrument
Performance Appraisal Instrument
Feedback Forms
Employee Development Plan
Position Description
Quality Standards
Plan for Training
Training for Supervisors
Training for Employees
Training for New Employees
Final Approval Process
Present Draft Recommendations to Faculty Senate, Classified Senate, and Council of Managers
Feedback from Faculty Senate, Classified Senate, and Council of Managers
Revisions Made
Submit to Campus Council for Final Approval

Accomplishing Educational Purposes: A Plan for Continuous Monitoring

Carol J. Mishler
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In addressing Criterion Three, every institution will need to ask: what evidence exists to demonstrate whether or not the institution is accomplishing its purposes? While institutions may do a credible job of marshaling this evidence once every decade in a self-study, few have found a way to monitor their accomplishment of purposes on an ongoing basis. Yet there are many advantages of a systematic approach to monitoring achievement of institutional purposes. Among them are: offering greater public accountability, using the monitoring data to understand and improve performance, demonstrating institutional effectiveness, and responding to Carver governance model trustees who are interested in the larger "ends" of the institution (achievement of mission and purposes). These were the major reasons Fox Valley Technical College (FVTC) initiated a plan for regularly monitoring its purposes, following its 1995-96 NCA self-study.

Development of College Purposes

As part of its 1995-96 NCA self-study, FVTC's NCA Steering Committee initiated a complete review of the college mission, purposes, values, and vision. The NCA Steering Committee, with the addition of one Board of Trustees member and the college's executives, undertook the task of recasting or, if necessary, initially developing these statements. Since FVTC had no consistently published, well-articulated purposes to review, the NCA Steering Committee first reached consensus on the criteria for a statement of purposes. They agreed that the purpose statement should identify customer markets, show the parameters of the college's business, be reasonably specific and detailed, and be aligned with *Wisconsin State Statute 38. 001*. This statute is the legal basis for existence of all sixteen Wisconsin technical colleges; it identifies various constituencies the colleges should be serving and, in legal terms, lists major purposes. The NCA Steering Committee drafted eight purposes for review by others. Community leaders, in a survey involving government, education, and business leaders, rated each of the purposes in importance and made suggestions for change. Following changes in wording, the following eight purpose statements were adopted by the FVTC Board of Trustees in December 1994:

Purpose 1:	Deliver associate degree, technical diploma, and certificate level programs which provide the skills and knowledge necessary to address occupational competencies from initial job-entry to advanced certification.
Purpose 2:	Provide training and education to upgrade the occupational skills of individuals and the business and industry workforce.
Purpose 3:	Offer related academic and technical support courses for joint labor/management apprenticeship programs.
Purpose 4:	Design and deliver customized training and technical assistance for public and private sector employers to further economic development.
Purpose 5:	Present personal development opportunities to improve the individual's ability to solve problems, address change, and otherwise satisfy personal growth needs.
Purpose 6:	Collaborate with secondary schools, colleges, and universities to enable students' smooth passage between educational systems.

Purpose 7: Provide basic skills programming and counseling services necessary to enhance the success of students with diverse age and educational backgrounds.

Purpose 8: Offer educational programming and supportive services for special populations to address barriers prohibiting participation in education and employment.

Reasons for Continuous Monitoring of Purposes

For the NCA self-study, evidence demonstrating accomplishment of each of the eight purposes was presented in the section responding to Criterion Three in a chapter entitled "Institutional Effectiveness." For some purposes, a great deal of evidence could be marshaled to demonstrate achievement, while for others, less material existed. As the self-study was completed, it became apparent that the task of responding to Criterion Three would have been easier had the college been regularly monitoring the achievement of its purposes and keeping well-organized documentation. Yet this insight alone did not precipitate developing a system for continuous monitoring of the eight college purposes. Rather, the FVTC Board of Trustees' adoption of the Carver governance model led to the monitoring plan that FVTC currently uses.

In 1995, the FVTC Board was in its second year of implementing the Carver governance model. The eight purposes, along with the mission and vision, were serving as its "ends" policies, which simply refers to the central results or outcomes the college exists to produce. In Carver governance, the board focuses intensely on the whether the college is achieving its mission and purposes. As Carver (1990) has noted:

> ...evaluation of Ends is important to leadership in that it discloses unacceptable deviation from the desired values, it enables the board to relax about the present so it can keep its mind on the future, and it keeps board policies constantly in the spotlight and, therefore, more likely to be amended as they grow out of date (p. 76).

Boards are urged to evaluate results "not by being seduced by sophistication, but in persevering in a compelling, disarmingly simple quest: what did we want to accomplish? Are we doing it?" (Carver, p. 80). It was this aim that the FVTC plan for monitoring college purposes intended to fulfill.

Development of Monitoring Plan

To develop the monitoring plan, the vice president of marketing and economic development and the director of planning, research and development identified broad categories that could apply to almost any purpose of the college. For instance, for every purpose the breadth of service of the college's offering is an important element to monitor. What is the variety and scope of the service? How much is the college offering? Other examples of broad elements were:

- ◇ customers served program output cost/efficiency
- ◇ curriculum relevance
- ◇ collaborative partnerships
- ◇ customer satisfaction

While these elements were not always applicable for monitoring achievement of each purpose, they provided a common thread across the monitoring plan. Next, within each element, indicators of effectiveness were identified. Indicators are more measurement-oriented items, such as the number of students served or percent of customers satisfied with services. Data are needed to complete this part of monitoring. For each purpose, the reporting frequency, the comparison benchmarks, and whether the monitoring results are reviewed by the board or by the college administration was noted on a matrix. An example in Appendix A shows this model for FVTC's Purpose 4, which is to offer customized training and technical assistance services to employers to further economic development.

Finally, a timeline for reporting to the FVTC Board of Trustees was constructed so that the board would review monitoring reports for each purpose in the course of their eleven meetings per year. Some of the purposes had a scope large enough that they had to be broken down into two parts for monitoring. Effort was made to choose the best month of the year for monitoring each purpose. For instance, when new data helpful in monitoring a particular purpose usually becomes available in a certain month, that purpose would not be scheduled for a monitoring report in the month preceding. The calendar for monitoring is shown in Figure 1. As reports were presented throughout the first year, the format was improved, the board's feedback on the reports was captured regularly, and FVTC staff became involved in assembling, presenting, and reviewing monitoring information.

Board Monitoring Report Calendar

Month	Purpose
June	Purpose 5 - Personal Development Instruction
July	None. Board does not have a regular meeting
August	Purpose 7a - Basic Skills Instruction
September	Purpose 7b - Counseling Services
October	Purpose 8 - Service to Special Populations
November	Purpose 6 - Collaboration with Other Educational Entities
December	Mid-year reflection on monitoring reports
January	Purpose 3 - Apprenticeship Programs
February	Purpose 4 - Economic Development Contracting
March	Purpose Ib - Offering of Certificates
April	Purpose Ia - Associate Degree and Tech Diploma Programs
May	Purpose 2 - Instruction for Employed Adults

Figure 1

Benefits of Continuous Monitoring of College Purposes

The college has experienced several benefits of having a systematic approach to monitoring achievement of college purposes. First, the FVTC Board is gaining knowledge of how well the college is fulfilling its mission and purposes, promoting intelligent board decision-making and questioning. The board is free to concentrate on the future, knowing it is receiving regular information about the ends of the college. Second, college faculty and staff have ready access to current information that they can use in many different ways, such as informing others outside the college of their performance, using in grant proposals, etc. Third, college staff are able to see gaps in performance data and are triggered to collect these data so that performance related to a given purpose can be better monitored. Fourth, the monitoring plan serves for now as the college institutional effectiveness plan. Finally, if the monitoring plan is maintained at its current level for ten years, the college will be in an excellent position to easily respond to Criterion Three in the next self-study.

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Plan for Monitoring College Effectiveness: Purpose #4

Design and deliver customized training and technical assistance for public and private sector employers to further economic development

Indicators of Effectiveness		Board	Admin	Reporting Frequency	Comparison/Benchmark
Breadth of Service	• Variety/scope of training and technical assistance topics available	◆		Every 2 years	
	• Volume of seminar and workshop training		◆	Semi-Annually	4 Year Trend & YTD*
Customers Served	• Number of employers served by county and out-of-district	◆		Annually	5 Year Trend
	• Number of employees trained	◆		Annually	5 Year Trend and statewide comparison for last year completed
	• FTEs	◆		Annually	5 Year Trend and statewide comparison for last year completed
Program Ouput	• Gross revenue generated	◆		Annually	5 Year Trend and statewide comparison for last year completed
	• Percent of cost recovery in contracting	◆		Annually	5 Year Trend and statewide competition
	• Volume of contract services provided	◆		Monthly	
Collaborative Partnerships	• Collaborative agreements and partnerships	◆		As developed	
	• Donations, consignments, grants, awards		◆	As developed	
Customer Satisfaction	• Employer satisfaction with services		◆	Quarterly	*
	• Participant evaluation of training		◆	Quarterly	*
	• Continuing clients (repeat business)		◆	Semi-Annually	5 Year Trend *
	• Number of claims against Training Guarantee		◆	As Developed	

* Under development

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Chapter III

Implementing Assessment of Student Academic Achievement

Measuring Moving Targets...◆...◆...◆

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Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
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Assessment: A Moving Target with Rising Expectations

Patricia D. Murphy
Robert L. Harrold

Although the NCA initiative on assessment has been in place since 1989, and assessment plans have been filed, institutions are at various stages in the development and implementation of an assessment plan and program. The expectations of both NCA and institutions are rising in relation to assessment. What "passed" three years ago is no longer sufficient. The emphasis on evidence relating to what students are learning in order to improve that learning continues from outside and inside the academy. How are institutions and evaluation teams preparing to meet these continually rising expectations?

What the Expectations Are

The revised Criteria Three and Four (1996) make it clear that "more is needed." The Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (1996) has adopted a pattern of evidence for graduate education and further stated that this pattern "will not be the only outcome of the Commission's work on graduate education" (p.1).

For NCA, assessment of student academic achievement is concerned with evidence of student learning, for the purpose of improving that learning. Assessment requires measurement of learning outcomes (Criterion Three p. 4). The purpose of assessment is documentable student academic achievement to use for improvement.

From assessment, evidence about student learning is expected: in general education, in the major, and in graduate and professional education. No academic program can be omitted. The bottom line is learning; the purpose is improving that learning.

From cumulating research evidence, we now know more about learning. We know more about relationships among learning activities, teaching methods, and student achievement. In addition, we know more about how learning takes place and about strategies that facilitate learning (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Davis, 1990).

Assessment of student academic achievement in the general studies program is expected. Several outcomes expected from the general education program are cited in Criterion Three. Student learning in the major is to be assessed, as is achievement of specified learning outcomes by students in graduate and professional programs. Distance delivery programs are **not** excluded (CIHE, 1995).

The revised Criteria Three and Four (1996) and the López (1996) paper reporting desired characteristics of assessment programs by consultant-evaluators make the expectations very clear. Institutions are expected to routinely update, review, and revise their plans. In addition, institutions need to be able to document that assessment has improved student learning.

Evidence of use of assessment data to improve learning and instruction is also required. The question to be asked continually of all assessment activities for improvement is: What evidence is provided by the activity that indicates where learning is going well and where it needs improvement? The results should provide faculty with information useful for improvement. The philosophy is that "all things can be improved."

Assessment data are expected to contribute to decision making, curriculum revisions, faculty development, improvement of faculty teaching, and improvement of student learning, and to play a role in planning (Criterion Three, p. 4), in budgeting (Criterion Three, p. 4), and in faculty rewards (Criterion Three, p. 6). Assessment activities and results are to be related clearly to other planning and budgeting processes, including program review.

Institutions are expected to have in place policies and procedures that make assessment "count"—such as, in the faculty promotion and tenure process, as scholarship, and as evidence of effective teaching.

Where Is Your Institution?

Institutions are at various stages in the implementation of assessment activities. Institutional activities can be identified along a continuum, from inadequate through adequate to exemplary, in relation to the moving target of expectations for assessment activities.

From the beginning there have been several steps implicit in the development of an assessment program. These included the following kinds of activities.

1. Faculty identify the learning outcomes expected from the general education component of the program, from the major, and from graduate and professional education programs.
2. Decide how to gather the evidence of student learning by finding or developing some measuring instruments, specific enough to serve as evidence of where student learning is going well and where it may need improvement.
3. Use the results of the assessment activities as part of the decision-making process to improve that learning, where the intent is to improve faculty teaching and student learning.

Institutional experience with these activities has developed some principles or guidelines to follow to increase productivity. For example, expected learning outcomes are more useful if clearly stated and measurable. In developing or selecting measuring instruments, the "match" with the expected outcomes is critical. How the data are collected and analyzed affects validity and usefulness. Procedures for the distribution of results must be established. Feedback loops are critical to the use of results.

If an institution has gone no farther than the three steps outlined previously, it is already behind. Expectations now require **use** of assessment results in faculty rewards, program reviews, institutional planning, and budgeting; these constitute the next steps in developing a complete institutional assessment program.

How to Reach the Moving Target

If an institution is not yet at the last step, how does it get there? Today, there are many more resources available to assist institutions and evaluation teams than there were even a few years ago. NCA supports the position that universities must retain responsibility for assuring the quality of academic programs and degrees.

◇ **Improving learning.** An institution can use assessment data when making decisions about the curriculum, instruction, programs, and services. Randolph (1994) urges the use of assessment data for its most obvious purpose, to improve student learning.

1. Use the results to improve student learning, since improvement of learning is the primary purpose of assessment: modify curriculum or courses, strengthen faculty expertise, change methods of instruction.
2. Use results to plan faculty development programs, e.g., technology-based instruction, teaching critical thinking, facilitation of student writing skills, and demonstrate how to interpret and use assessment data.
3. Provide rewards for faculty efforts in assessment.

◇ **Program review.** Assessment should be an important part of program review. Assessment data should be considered in judging a program.

Traditionally, academic program review has focused heavily on inputs. These have included such characteristics as cost, need/demand, quality, centrality, productivity, and marketability. On many campuses program review serves the same (or almost the same) purpose as NCA's concept of institutional effectiveness. The question of "how well the institution is accomplishing its purposes" or "how well the institution is doing what it says it is doing" is about the same as the program review question of "how well the program is doing." Examples of effectiveness indicators include demand for the graduates, service to non-majors, characteristics of students enrolled, cost per student credit hour, cost vs. revenue, and alumni support. These are also typical of program review. Assessment of student academic achievement is a part of institutional effectiveness, but the two are not synonymous.

The quality of the program review process is critical. Barak and Brier (1990) list principles of fairness, comprehensiveness, timeliness, communication, objectivity, credibility, and utility be followed in "good" program review processes to be successful with useful results. Data from assessment of student learning should have an important role in program review. After all, the primary purpose of an institution is, by definition, the promotion of learning. Thus, student academic achievement is an important part of program quality and program productivity. Assessment data need to be considered in making judgments about a program.

◇ **Planning.** Assessment should be tied to institutional planning. Data from assessment activities contribute to identification of academic strengths and weaknesses. Results of assessment are considered in institutional planning processes, which, in turn, affect budgeting for implementation of new ideas or modifications.

◇ **Budgeting.** Assessment results as well as program review and planning data are supposed to have an impact on budgeting and resource allocation. Consultant-evaluators expect to find a relationship between assessment activities and the other management processes of program review, planning, and budgeting. Data and other information from the four processes are expected to influence each other. The relationship should go beyond simply overlapping membership on the various committees.

Improvement is the goal of each process. It seems strange that institutions would not take advantage of available data to assist in improving the overall health of the institution.

Teams look for evidence of the integration of planning, budgeting, program review, and assessment. While each has its own specific purpose, integration makes use of the contribution of all components.

◇ **Resources available.** There are now many resources available to help institutions reach and keep track of the moving target. Institutions should read widely, including the NCA publications. Institutions should keep moving, incrementally; try new things; give wide publicity to examples of success. They should be aware of the ongoing assessment activities of specialized accrediting agencies. Some, such as the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET), place great emphasis on the assessment of student learning; others include accounting, business, teacher education, and nursing.

Conclusion

By 1995-96 evaluation teams had shifted their emphasis from assessment plans to the assessment programs and use of results. Now, the target has moved to the tie-in with program review, planning, and budgeting. Every institutional self-study and every evaluation team must judge the strengths and usefulness of an institution's assessment program.

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Student Assessment at Ohio University: The Institutional Impact and Assessment Plan

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Since 1981 Ohio University has been assessing its students. A multidimensional program was implemented to provide a variety of assessment measures at various times to Ohio University faculty and staff. Done by the Office of Institutional Research, the Institutional Impact Project makes use of both nationally developed assessment instruments and locally developed instruments. Ohio University has used its Institutional Impact Project in the process of defining its mission and examining and making judgments about its quality to enhance its effectiveness.

The original Institutional Impact Project has five components. The ACT College Outcome Measures Program (COMP) Objective Test is a standardized test of general education knowledge and skills. Student tracking, retention, and graduation rate data yield information about retention and graduation characteristics on groups of students. The student treatment study and student involvement study are surveys of current students that assess how students perceive they are treated and the activities in which students are involved, respectively. The freshman marketing study is a survey of admitted freshmen that assesses why students apply for admission and enroll at Ohio University. Two follow-up surveys of graduates (one year after graduation and five years after graduation) provide outcomes information to colleges and departments. Because most of the Institutional Impact studies include population (not sample) data, it is possible to break down the results by academic college and department. Colleges and departments receive results on their own students and can make departmental and institutional comparisons over time. Academic program review assessment data are reported by program when departments are reviewed every seven years. As of 1990 several departments were conducting their own student assessments. Some departments were doing their own major assessments of student competencies at the undergraduate and/or graduate level. These assessments, while useful to the individual departments for continuous improvement or specialized accreditation, had limited institutional value in terms of student assessment.

In 1993 the Provost asked each academic college to work with its department's faculty and the Office of Institutional Research to draft department-based assessment plans. They developed objectives for their students and methods to assess the student objectives, using existing and new assessments. They identified faculty responsible for assessing the students, the assessment timeline, and how the data would be used. The goal of each department's assessment was that it would lead to improving student learning, teaching, and student services. Department-based assessment activities were designed to address major programs, both undergraduate and graduate, on the Athens and regional campuses.

The North Central Association requires accredited colleges and universities to have student assessment plans, and Ohio University's plan is based on North Central's assessment plan criteria. Department-based assessment is emphasized in this plan. Measuring what students learn in their major—student academic achievement—was an important addition to the original Institutional Impact Project. The main focus of the assessment plan is on department-based objectives for students, either for majors in the department or for students taking their courses. Faculty are to use assessment information to affect change where it will have the most impact—the individual academic unit.

Through the development of the 1995 assessment plan, student assessment is now organized at three levels. First, the Institutional Impact project yields institution-wide information about student learning and services (institution-wide assessment). Second, the Office of Institutional Research gives each academic college and department its own result (institution-wide support of department-based assessment). Third, each department is engaged in assessing its own students (department-based assessment).

The Office of Institutional Research continues to conduct the studies in the Institutional Impact Project. Institutional Research is a primary resource for the colleges and departments in their assessment efforts and strives to find new ways to communicate and implement student assessments.

The department-based assessment plans were implemented beginning fall quarter 1995. Each department's faculty are to prepare brief annual reports, emphasizing evidence of completion of measurable objectives, on their assessment activities and results. These reports will be shared among the entire department for comment, review, discussion, and implementation. From the department a summary will go to the college's dean, who will review and comment and either return for revision or forward to the university provost and president.

In 1995-96, a university-wide assessment committee was appointed by the president to discuss implementation and review of department-based student assessment results. Incentives and consequences of assessment have yet to be decided. The college assessment coordinators and the Director of Institutional Research continue to meet to share ideas and experiences. The Institutional Impact Project itself will be evaluated annually among this group. Information about the department-based assessment activities will be shared among the colleges.

The Institutional Impact and Assessment Plan is a flexible plan. Changes in objectives, assessment activities, and uses will develop as departmental needs change. As Ohio develops its performance funding model for its four-year universities, this will affect Ohio University's assessment plan. As the president and the planning officers link assessment to program improvement and resource allocation at the college and academic department levels, new approaches and uses will develop. As the University Curriculum Council finalizes its academic program self-study process, new approaches and uses will develop.

Assessment Review Committee

In 1995-96 Ohio University began implementing department-based student assessment. Through each academic college, departments submitted the first round of results of their assessments—how the plans were implemented and the program improvements made or planned.

In June 1996 the Provost, on the advice of the President's Policy Committee on Assessment, appointed a committee to review assessment reports. The committee recommended resource allocation to specific units for the purpose of improving undergraduate education. A total of $200,000 was set aside for reallocation, and six awards were made in 1996-97. The members of the committee are listed below.

- Joe Bova-Director and Professor, School of Art
- Gary Moden-Associate Provost
- Valerie Perotti-Professor, Management Systems
- Michael Prudich-Chair and Professor, Chemical Engineering
- Barbara Reeves-Chair, Assessment Review Committee; Associate Provost
- Bob Shelly-Professor, Sociology
- Gary Small-Associate Professor, Chemistry

Award Recommendations

Awards go to six programs on the basis of their reported assessment activities. Each of these program reports clearly states objectives, focuses on student outcomes, and provides excellent documentation of accomplishing the objectives. They also describe improvements and enhancements that are a result of assessment activities. Each program is listed below with a highlighted activity from its report.

The following units receive $45,000 each:

◇ **School of Accountancy.** This school set up Continuous Improvement Teams to look at five specific areas and to develop plans for improvement based on assessment in these areas. They make excellent use of information provided by Institutional Research in their assessment activities.

◇ **School of Communication Systems Management.** This school uses a variety of internal and external indicators as sources of information for assessment. The capstone course in this school focuses on actual problem solutions in the field and feedback from these activities serves as a basis for program improvement.

◇ **School of Human and Consumer Services.** This school uses a exemplary pattern of internal assessment. Examination (certification, license tests) information is used for program assessment where appropriate, and portfolios are used to assess students in non-examination areas.

The following units receive $22,000 each:

◇ **School of Journalism.** This school does an excellent job of documenting students' experiences and obtaining feedback from employers in practica and internships. In turn, this information serves as a basis for improving internships and assessing students' self-development.

◇ **Department of Psychology.** This department uses assessment information to make curricular changes in order to improve the math and science skills of students for graduate school or jobs. Assessment data are also a factor in making decisions for undergraduate teaching.

◇ **School of Recreation and Sports Sciences.** This school develops and uses evaluation tools to assess skills and competencies for practica and internships in order to eliminate previous inconsistencies. They also use exit interviews to obtain information for the purpose of program improvement.

Best Practices in Assessment

The following list of best practices is one that the committee developed while reviewing the reports of assessment activities. The departments or schools whose reports contained effective uses of these practices were those selected by the committee to receive funding.

◇ A clear statement of department specific goals that matches reported assessment activities

◇ Faculty involvement in curricular assessment and improvement

◇ Use of multiple measures for assessment data

◇ Use of information gathered by Institutional Research

◇ Integration of departmental, college, and university missions

◇ Focus on student outcomes with emphasis on both benchmarks and value added measures

◇ Improvements based on results or a plan of how results will be used for improvement

- ◇ Assessment activities of other elements of the model that are replicable to other units
- ◇ Continuum of assessment activities from first year to work experiences

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Reporting the Results of Assessment

William L. Hooper

At Southwest Baptist University (SBU) the annual report of assessment activities and procedures to the university community is an integral part of the institutional assessment plan. This session uses the experience of SBU to give suggestions for the preparation of an annual assessment report.

Content of the Report

The assessment plan and the annual report at SBU cover four areas: general education, the major field, alumni success, and student life. The annual report covers all of these.

☐ Assessment of General Education

Specific courses are linked to general education requirements and outcomes. In addition to comparative test scores on a standardized instrument, these questions are used to evaluate general education outcomes:

- ◇ To what extent do general education outcomes permeate departmental objectives and courses?
- ◇ What patterns of evidence show student achievement of general education outcomes?
- ◇ How are general education outcomes linked with the expected learning outcomes of the major?

☐ Assessment of the Major Field

Each department has identified student outcomes in the major and developed assessment procedures that determine whether the intended outcomes and objectives are being achieved. Assessment in the major field covers 1) the essential knowledge base of the discipline, 2) the basic technical skills essential to the discipline, and 3) the ability of students to integrate the major field both with their personal faith and goals and with the professional values and attitudes necessary for that discipline.

☐ Assessment of Alumni

Alumni are surveyed every two- to five-years, depending upon the needs of the major field. Alumni assessment may include general assessment of the university experience as well as of the major field. A standardized questionnaire that allows up to 30 questions by the major department is used for all alumni. Some locally-prepared questions request alumni to suggest changes that would make the total educational experience more viable. Two criteria for assessing the success of graduates are the degree of alumni satisfaction with their academic preparation for current employment and the overall satisfaction of alumni with the total education experience.

With permission of graduates, a few employers are surveyed to assess the job performance of alumni in relation to their SBU preparation.

☐ Assessment of Student Life

Attitudes, beliefs, values, goals, self-concept, and interpersonal relationships are aspects in the affective domain that define the nature of Southwest Baptist University and its commitments as a

Christian university. While this domain is more difficult to assess, tools have been developed that will help the University to measure the extent to which changes in the attitudes and personal lives of students can be attributed to their experiences at SBU.

Organization of the Report

An annual written report of assessment results is made by each department through the appropriate college dean to the Director of Assessment. Following a review by the Assessment and Evaluation Committee of the Faculty Senate, the Director of Assessment issues a composite report to the total university community. This annual report of assessment activities and assessment procedures is used by all concerned to provide public assurance of SBU's effectiveness and to stimulate institutional improvement.

The Report Is Descriptive

One purpose of an institutional assessment plan is to provide a longitudinal data base that can be used for internal decision-making. Therefore, the annual report of assessment should provide patterns of evidence that show how well students have attained a knowledge base in the major field and general education. At SBU, the report includes a detailed description of what was assessed the preceding year, the assessment procedures and devices used, and an evaluation of the results.

The annual report contains patterns of evidence that show the achievement of learning outcomes by students. This can serve both as a validation of current departmental efforts and as a guide to desired changes in instruction and curriculum. Department chairs respond to questions designed to discover which student learning outcomes are addressed, the assessment procedures and devices used, and the results of assessment.

The Report Is Evaluative

The report contains an assessment of assessment. This is a review of assessment procedures and instruments used the preceding year and an evaluation of their effectiveness. The validity, appropriateness, and effectiveness of the assessment process and the devices used must be demonstrated. Several criteria are used to assess the assessment process:

- ◇ Are we able to measure student academic achievement both quantitatively and qualitatively?
- ◇ Can assessment procedures and devices be tested for their validity and reliability in assessment?
- ◇ Are assessment procedures and devices appropriate for the outcomes to be assessed?
- ◇ Are procedures and devices economical and efficient in time and materials?
- ◇ Are procedures and devices able to assess the basic concepts and content of the academic program?
- ◇ Do we have adequate means to assess the knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes necessary for the work place?
- ◇ Are the intellectual standards, set by the faculty to determine satisfactory student achievement, valid and reliable for assessing student learning?
- ◇ Do procedures and devices give direction both for the qualitative and quantitative improvement of academic programs in the future?

Assessment methods not yielding valid, reliable, and useful individual scores should not be used. This is particularly important when a department has constructed its own measurement instrument or added locally-designed questions to a standardized instrument. Assessment plans might involve further trials of a procedure or device. Plans could call for continuing those instructional and assessment efforts that produce positive results.

The Report Is Prescriptive

The report describes in some detail the plans a department has for effecting change in curriculum and instruction, based upon the results of assessment. If assessment gives no data that can direct the efforts of a department toward strengthening and improving instruction, questions must be raised about the assessment procedures and devices being used. Assessment plans also include detailed plans for implementing change in instruction, curriculum, and assessment procedures and instruments during the next academic year.

Coordinating the Annual Report

At SBU coordination of the annual report is the responsibility of the Director of Assessment, who reports to the Provost. Additional means of coordinating reporting are the following:

- ◇ A committee of the Faculty Senate supports the Director of Assessment.
- ◇ A series of workshops were held to assist department chairs and faculty members in the development and use of criteria for the evaluation of assessment results. These workshops are continuing.
- ◇ Guidelines and necessary forms for department chairs to use were prepared by the Director of Assessment and reviewed by the faculty Assessment and Evaluation Committee. Training workshops have been and will continue to provide help to department chairs in the preparation of their report.
- ◇ A filing date, at the end of the academic year, has been set for annual reports to be submitted to the Director of Assessment.
- ◇ The degree to which the plans for change are carried out is monitored closely and reported to the Faculty Senate by the Director of Assessment and the Assessment and Evaluation Committee.
- ◇ Assessment results are released to faculty and students in a timely manner. Interpretation and use guidelines have been developed for locally-produced instruments, which enable students and faculty to interpret the results.

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From Assessment Plan to Active Assessment: Documenting the Process

Timothy Campagna
Robin Throne

Overview of Hamilton College

Hamilton College, a three-campus, two-year, private college in Iowa, received initial accreditation from the North Central Association in August 1996. The College was originally established in 1900 in Mason City, Iowa, as a proprietary career college, and has the distinction of being the oldest continuously operating college that specializes in business education in the state. Campuses were opened in Cedar Rapids in 1980 and Des Moines in 1988.

In 1990, under the leadership of a new owner and president, John Huston, the College moved forward as an institution of higher education through the pursuit of regional accreditation and as a degree-granting institution. Through the decade, as the need for more highly qualified graduates increased, Hamilton College integrated general education with professional skills and continues to offer students a career-focused education to achieve their personal and career potential.

From Plan to Action

Like other institutions of higher education, Hamilton College's Assessment Plan emerged from a strategic plan that cited the assessment of student academic achievement as the primary objective. Through the six-year NCA candidacy process, the institution made significant changes and progress in the area of assessment. Following the guidelines for the Commission's assessment initiative, an Assessment Plan was implemented that focused on five assessment areas: Admissions and Academic Placement, Academic Achievement, General Education, Faculty Accomplishments/Curriculum and Instruction, and Student Development. The plan measured the chronological journey of a student's educational experience at Hamilton College from entrance through placement, thus reflecting the College mission and purpose statements. Assessment matrices were created that laid out a linear view of each assessment area, its timeline, standard, coordinator, and use of the assessment results (See Figure 1).

While the plan was comprehensive in scope and reflected the College's mission and purposes, it was not viewed as a cyclical process that had a direct impact on the College's decision-making structure. To overcome this hurdle, College leadership focused on three primary components to initiate that change: restructuring the

Hamilton College Assessment Plan

Student Academic Achievement

Explanation of Criteria						
Assessment Area	Purpose	Assessment Tool	Time Schedule	Standard	Coordinator	Use of Results

Figure 1

Assessment Committee's governance, an evolution of the assessment plan's conceptual framework, and changes in the institutional reporting cycle.

These modifications in assessment focus and structure elevated the process from a plan to an active program within the institution. Communication between Assessment Committee members and their respective campuses began the development of the liaison role for committee members under the new governance structure and helped to reposition the committee within the restructured decision-making hierarchy for the College. Faculty and support staff began to feel the impact of assessment results on their areas and voiced opinion regarding assessment in faculty and support staff meetings. With this impact, College leadership was able to evaluate the College's information flow to locate and isolate needed changes. David Dettman, a member of the Hamilton College Board of Directors, described the dramatic shift in assessment as a "quantum leap" from what the program had been in the past.

Assessment Committee Governance Structure

An administrative evaluation of the assessment process determined the need for a more structured system of institutional research to better organize, utilize, and sustain the data the assessment plan generated. With the new Director of Institutional Research, College leadership reviewed a report that had been issued by NCA Associate Director Cecilia López in March 1996. In a qualitative study of consultant-evaluator comments from 1993-1996, Dr. López reported in her findings the practices that evaluators had praised in assessment plans, regardless of the type of institution being evaluated. She outlined two structures for assessment program governance: the Chief Academic Officer and the Assessment Committee. In her report, she found that evaluators were unanimous about the need for an individual to be charged with accountability for assessment direction, as "committees alone cannot provide effective leadership."

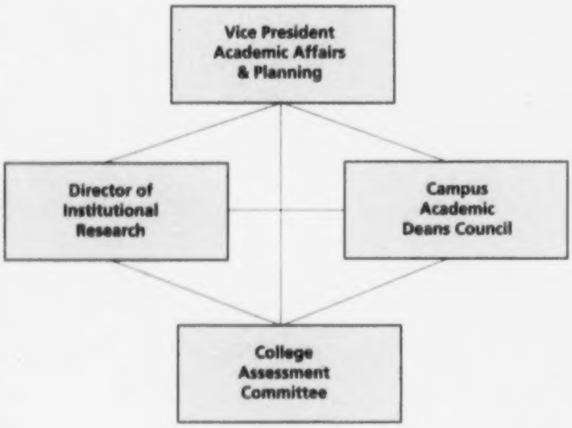

Figure 2

The Hamilton College Assessment Committee's governance structure was modified to align the group with the academic officers, so that recommendations based on the Committee's inquiry went directly to those with management responsibility for academics, who in turn are responsible for closing the feedback loop back to the Assessment Committee. The Vice President of Academic Affairs was charged with the primary responsibility for assessment and delegated the authority for assessment activity and reporting to the Director of Institutional Research.

The Director of Institutional Research serves as chairperson for the Assessment Committee, linking the Committee and the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Planning. Campus academic administration meets quarterly with the Vice President to review assessment results and allows for their impact on the College's decision-making infrastructure. The three-campus Academic Deans are responsible for reporting changes from assessment results to the Vice President, and communicating changes to the Director of Institutional Research, or directly to the Assessment Committee, thus closing the feedback loop in the assessment program (See Figure 2).

Breathing Life into the Conceptual Framework

Throughout the NCA candidacy process, there remained uncertainty as to how the data from assessment activity would be used in the College's decision-making processes, and how the results generated from the plan would flow back to the College's decision-making infrastructure. For a multi-campus institution, it was crucial for institutional groups, if they were to conceptualize the program fully, first to see how the assessment cycle is connected to them in the College's information flow. Yet, the Assessment Plan's matrices did not provide a sufficient conceptual framework for a full grasp of the program. What remained confusing to various groups was exactly how the results from assessment activities would actually be used to improve teaching and learning.

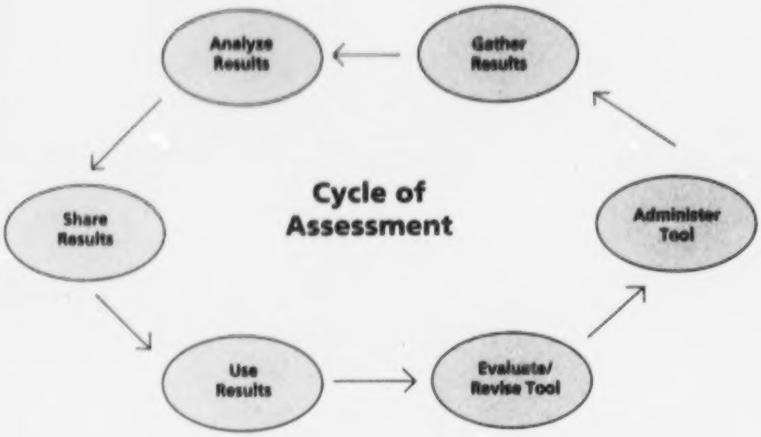

Figure 3

To achieve a more broad-based conceptualization of the assessment cycle, a simple flowchart was established and distributed to all groups within the College so that the assessment process could be first visualized (See Figure 3). The flowchart contrasted the complex assessment matrices in the Assessment Plan and allowed participants to begin to view the program as an active, ongoing cycle within the institution.

Once the flowchart was distributed, constituencies better perceived the process structure of the assessment matrices. The Assessment Committee then adopted a philosophy that stated all areas of the College impact a student's educational experience and should be evaluated in an ongoing basis to determine their effectiveness. At the same time, Assessment Committee membership also agreed that all areas of the College needed representation on the Committee. Although the Committee membership maintained a faculty majority, representation was added from employment services, library, and ad hoc membership from admissions, financial aid, student services, and student records. With added representation from these other areas of the College services, the Assessment Committee became well linked with other committee communication in the system as well. As a result, assessment survey tools were evaluated for face and content validity, measurement instruments were created for the library and incorporated into the assessment plan, and formal studies of the College's entrance examination and developmental program were begun.

The Challenge of the Reporting Cycle in a Multi-Campus System

The former Assessment Committee governance structure had not provided the best process for the reporting and dissemination of assessment information. Instead, assessment recommendations and changes were recorded in committee meeting minutes and memoranda between constituencies, rather than through the formal reporting system now in place. Even though recommendations were conveyed and academic changes were made based on the data, the documentation was not always easily or readily attainable.

With the creation of an Institutional Research office came a centralized, systematic reporting system. Again, acting on advice from the López report, three levels of reporting were established: quarterly survey report cards, an annual review of assessment activities report, and an annual report to the College Board of Directors (See Figure 4).

With the new system, the quarterly survey report cards distribute survey results from the College's three primary survey tools: the graduate exit survey, the alumni survey, and the employer survey. Campus surveyors compile local results and a three-campus report is prepared by the Office of Institutional Research. The reports are distributed throughout the system and provide academic officers quarterly reports from these three groups regarding general education, technical programs, and student support services. Annual survey results are analyzed in the Review Report.

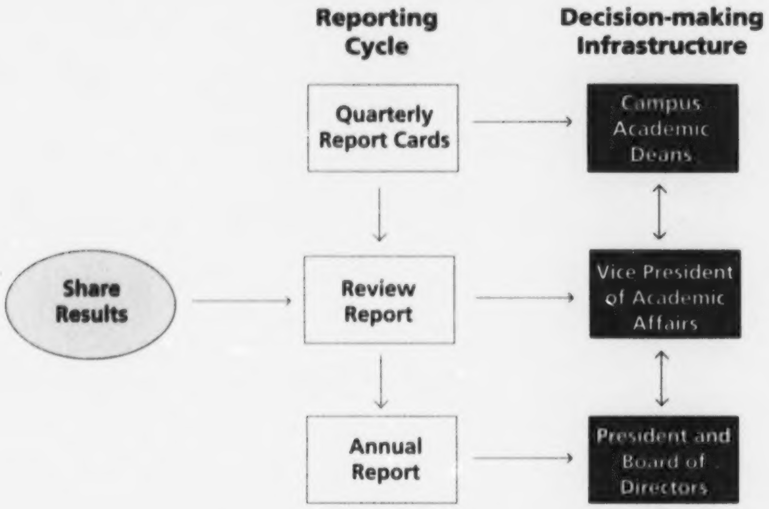

Figure 4

The Review Report, an annual review of assessment activities, allows for timely, campus-wide, systematic collection and analysis of data. It brings together in written form to College leadership, the progress that assessment has made in a year's time. It fosters communication and participation between constituencies and Assessment Committee; thus, it offers faculty and other groups the opportunity to participate in the assessment analysis, interpretation, and reporting process. The Review Report is a compilation of assessment findings for the year and is the documentation for changes, or plans for changes, the institution has made as a result of assessment activities.

The Annual Report to the College Board of Directors is an executive summary of the changes resulting from assessment activities for the year, and outlines the goals set by the Assessment Committee and Office of Institutional Research. The annual report is the final documentation for the year's reporting cycle and sets the tone for the activities and projects in the coming year.

Conclusion

At the 1996 AAHE Conference on Assessment and Quality, Marcia Mentkowski of Alverno College said, "assessment is active because learning is active and interactive. Active and interactive assessment means acting on emerging insights, with others, to improve student learning." Without full constituency understanding and involvement in assessment at Hamilton College, the College would not have moved the assessment of student academic achievement from a plan to a fully active program that is embraced at all levels of the institution.

Changes in the conceptual framework, reporting cycle, and assessment committee governance have raised assessment to a new level of understanding and assimilation within the Hamilton College system. Results from assessment activity are easily attainable through annual and quarterly reports, which also provide a gauge for the measurement of change over time. Although it has taken a great effort on the part of the Office of Institutional Research and the Assessment Committee membership, constituencies now better understand their role in the ongoing process, and how information gathered in the assessment process directly impacts teaching and learning at Hamilton College. The development and improvement of the IR office, the assessment program, and other measures of institutional effectiveness remain ongoing. However, the changes that occurred during the NCA candidacy period provided the necessary benchmark for future maturation of the assessment of student academic achievement and research activity at Hamilton College.

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Implementing a Student Assessment Plan in a Non-Traditional Setting: Resistances, Methods, and Interim Results

Charles Saltzman

This is an interim report of an ongoing effort to implement an assessment plan in a relatively unique setting—a small, young, free-standing institution that offers a doctoral program in a single discipline: Clinical Social Work.

As is generally true of the social work profession, with its ethos of practice competence, the Institute for Clinical Social Work, prior to seeking accreditation from North Central Association, had developed its educational program without extensive familiarity or fervor in relation to achievement testing and program evaluation that many academic institutions have come to regard as de rigueur. The faculty had adopted the familiar system of letter grades but evidenced little enthusiasm for written final examinations, for prelims, etc. Neither Graduate Record Examination scores nor Miller Analogies test scores, nor any other standardized test score for that matter, was required of applicants. Systematic program evaluation, if thought about at all, was relegated to the distant future.

This report of our experience to date will be of interest to colleagues in similar institutions as well as to representatives from more complex institutions in which programs or departments like ours exist. Similar programs, in our view, would include those emphasizing clinical or practice competencies where "knowing how," rather than "knowing that," matters most (counseling, clinical psychology, education and the performing arts come easily to mind).

Our disciplines deal with processes of human meaning making, however much they do not meet the test of computability. Our sciences, in the language of Jerome Bruner (1996), are "sciences of the subjective and of intersubjectivity (how individuals come to know other minds)." Although the positivist paradigm of "scientific method" is not irrelevant, it is not viewed as the only acceptable form of disciplined inquiry in these domains. Nonetheless, we recognize that to be persuasive an assessment program must reach beyond the impressionistic and the anecdotal, and must possess built-in safeguards against frail memory and self-serving distortion.

Lacking a well-established culture of assessment, though not without a strong sense of accountability to its students, supporters, and other constituencies, the faculty of ICSW required new learning, the identification of and resolution of resistances to such innovation and the emergence of a willingness to serve two masters.

The Institute for Clinical Social Work's *Plan to Assess Student Achievement* was approved by North Central Association in September 1994. Implementation began immediately, although several elements of the Plan were already in place and considered part of the necessary and normal operations of the Institute, e.g., the familiar letter grades A-F, and I (incomplete).

This interim report presents a brief overview of the complete Plan by way of providing a context for a detailed consideration of two new instruments that were designed to deal with our local version of what is clearly a universal problem, namely: the need to define a baseline, the level of competence students possess at the point of matriculation. Absent such a point of reference, neither individual student achievement nor the efficacy of instructional programs can be measured.

The first instrument, the Inventory of Practice Skills and Professional Activities, is a self-report instrument that elicits information regarding course content; training experiences; supervision; professional workload being maintained, including populations served by age, sex, and severity of illness. The instrument documents, in more manageable form, information that had heretofore been elicited in personal interviews prior to admission. More importantly, the instrument documents educational experience that is masked by course titles appearing on college transcripts. This instrument allows only for the reporting of experiences. It does not provide a measure of the competencies that may have been achieved. Recognizing this, a second instrument was developed consisting of a set of six essay questions, two from each of the three curricular sequences that comprise the academic program of ICSW: Conceptual Foundations, the Clinical Practicum, and Research Methodology.

We are not entirely alone in attempting a formal assessment of personal development and philosophy by means of written essays. Moes and Bussema reported a rigorous effort of this sort at the NCA Annual Meeting in 1996.

Engaging Resistance

Organizational consultants who facilitate strategic planning often help their clients identify factors that are likely to impede or limit the successful implementation of innovative plans and the achievement of strategic goals. These "barriers" can then be directly addressed and their interfering effects limited. This principle has its parallel, and possible origin, in the idea of "resistance" systematically examined by Sigmund Freud (1940), the founder of psychoanalysis, who was strongly impressed by the tenacity with which his patients clung to their maladaptive behavior despite their professed desire to change. He was convinced that his patients resisted efforts to bring to consciousness memories, fantasies and feelings in anticipation of the pain that would likely accompany them. Progress required the resolution of these resistances. Freud focused on internal mental states. Strategic planners in organizational settings are likely to focus on economic factors as barriers: the cost of labor, the unavailability of technology, the cost of capital, the number of competitors in the marketplace. Sophisticated planners, however, are not likely to ignore potential psychological barriers either. Managers, for example, may fear losing their jobs with a proposed organizational realignment. Line workers may be reluctant to learn new skills or procedures. Reorganization and reassignments may break up teams, informal work relationships, and friendships.

Institutions of higher learning contemplating major changes are not likely to succeed without recognizing and resolving major sources of resistance. We do not include in our definition of resistance reasonable and appropriate criticism of concrete proposals with their inevitable flaws and limitations. The central issue in resistance is the reluctance to do anything different.

The ICSW, dedicated to the preparation of clinical social workers, lies perhaps at the very extreme of the continuum of institutions likely to be acutely aware of processes of psychological resistance. Alertness alone provides no immunity to the expression of opposition. In the process of seeking accreditation by NCA and the concomitant necessity to develop and implement a comprehensive and credible Student Assessment Plan, the ICSW had to come to terms with its own internal resistances.

Trained in a tradition that venerates subjectivity, one that examines closely motive, meaning, and affect in human affairs, the faculty was being asked to recognize and value objectivity and measurement precision in the realm of human performance. Not only were their value commitments different, their competencies in the area of objective assessment were limited.

Other value commitments surfaced, also anchored in the humane perspective of the helping professions: respect for the individual, including the right to privacy, the right not to be evaluated or measured by unfamiliar standards. Some seemed to see testing as an aggressive act that made students needlessly anxious. How to address these concerns became the challenge of the Assessment Committee.

We were confident that our tradition of open, frank discussions at faculty meetings would permit and facilitate the expression of resistances in a way that would allow them to be constructively addressed. Faculty ownership of the plan, we were convinced, could only come about through broad participation in the planning process from the very beginning. The Assessment Committee of six members (10 percent of the total faculty) did its work with little reliance on outside experts. Serving on the committee were several individuals with significant training and experience in assessment, along with others drawn from other domains of interest. The plan that evolved was endogenous, grounded in the traditional humane values of the institution yet sufficiently rigorous to be persuasive to an external, perhaps skeptical, public.

Progress reports were presented and feedback elicited. What some thought could not be done, or would not be useful if done, proved to be interesting and stimulating. Those who had argued that the assessment would needlessly make students anxious were to learn that students did what was asked of them with some expression of annoyance or displeasure but with minimal anxiety. Several students explicitly acknowledged the reasonableness of the demands made upon them and the relevance of the activity to their education. Reality thus proved to be the antidote to the anticipatory anxiety voiced by some of the faculty. Respect for reality played a vital role in the process in still another way. Everyone agreed that accreditation by NCA was vital to the survival of ICSW; if projects are beginning, both independent initiatives beyond the purview of the assessment committee, both pursuing questions clearly relevant to assessment, and both likely to contribute to the ultimate improvement of the instructional program.

From the start, it was recognized that only through open, democratic discussion could the arguments for the necessity or desirability of developing an assessment plan be aired and challenged. What really matters, we were convinced, cannot be mandated. We sought commitment, not compliance. Fullan (1996) has reminded us that institutional change is a lengthy process filled with tension, uncertainty, and conflict. We have attempted to effect a change in the institutional culture. Our responsibilities as educators do not end with the construction of curriculum and the delivery of instruction, excellent as these may be. We are compelled by conscience and by colleagues to assess carefully what our students have learned.

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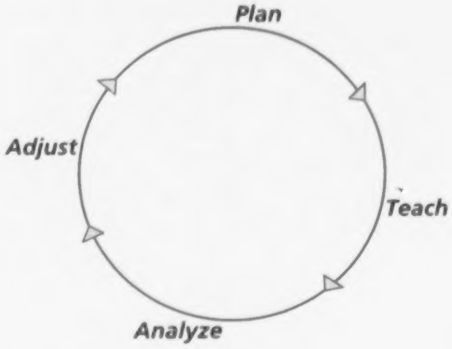
Shifting Cultures: Addressing Concerns of Higher Expectations Within a Two-Year College

Evonne Carter
Daniel Burrell

Educational institutions are not renown for embracing change. But as the needs of our customers change, it is vital for colleges that wish to remain educational leaders to shift their emphasis and efforts to become learning communities. Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) is one of the largest two-year technical colleges in the country. MATC's mission is to provide quality occupational, academic, and lifelong education for improving personal and employment potential. The college serves more than 60,000 students annually at four campuses throughout the Milwaukee metropolitan area. MATC offers a broad array of occupational and academic programs, ranging from diploma to associate degree level and also college transfer courses.

In response to the Wisconsin Technical College System's Institutional Effectiveness initiative as well as the NCA's new assessment focus, MATC made a commitment to begin a process for evaluating the academic achievement of students within their programs, courses, and activities in each of the seven instructional divisions. These assessments will determine the extent to which students are developing the knowledge and skills required not only for prospective employment but also for educational advancement and personal improvement. Thus in 1994, a committee of faculty, administrators, staff, and students convened to develop an assessment plan.



MATC Assessment Plan for Courses and Program

The components of the assessment process developed are based on the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) model—Plan Do Check Act: "plan, teach, analyze, and adjust" components of courses and programs. Embedded in the plan are requirements for higher expectations of students, clear competencies for courses, use of multiple assessments, and reflection and adjustment of components developed for improved academic success. The implementation of the Plan began in 1995. A plan implementation steering committee was established consisting primarily of faculty, but also administrators and staff members (the Student Outcomes Assessment Committee; SOA).

The first year of implementation was rocky. Few faculty members read the plan, fewer embraced it as gospel. Although the plan had been developed by a group made up primarily of faculty (12 out of 23), there was not sufficient buy in from the other 2,000 full- and part-time teachers affected by the recommendations.

The Implementation Committee's efforts the first year were aimed at informing colleagues about the plan and determining how implementation could occur. After the first year, 200 out of 2,000 courses had been revised; no other assessments had begun. Reactions to our efforts included mistrust, doubt, and anger. The faculty union viewed the plan as a violation of the contract related to workload. Faculty members were advised that implementation was "voluntary." Aside from those individuals who viewed assessment as a professional responsibility, there was little motivation to get involved.

In the second year of implementation, it was obvious that the focus needed to change, not only for the committee, but also for the institution. As educators in a technical college, we offer cognitive, affective, and psychomotor "enhancements" to our students. In the Milwaukee area, there are numerous postsecondary institutions competing for students. We at MATC must be committed to providing the best product to retain our customers and to provide the community with the most advanced workforce. One major shift that was needed was to educate instructors to become "customer-oriented" and personally responsible for their "products."

The SOA committee began the second year of implementation with a communication blitz. Through all available modes, we communicated the foci of the committee, the opportunities available for professional development in the areas of assessment, the benefits of performance based instruction, and the successes that were occurring. By the end of the first semester, there were fewer complaints about the plan from the faculty, there was a greater understanding of what was expected, and there was a sense of progress felt by the committee members that also could be documented by the number of courses being revised and the number of people being involved.

The development and implementation of the Assessment plan at MATC has caused a shifting of the academic culture. We have gone from an awareness of the plan, to an acceptance, and now to an application of the recommendations. Course revisions include: statements of clear expectations, application and synthesis of knowledge and skills, and alternative assessment strategies to enhance student success. As we revise courses and analyze our program goals, we are changing the status quo. And we are developing a new paradigm for education in the Milwaukee community.

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Implementing Assessment Plans: Motivating Faculty Before and After a Team Visit

Philip K. Way
Marshall Goodman

The Issue

Accreditation bodies, such as the North Central Association (NCA), are keen to see faculty in member colleges and universities assess student learning continuously. However, it is sometimes difficult to motivate faculty to engage in assessment, both before and after a site visit.

There are many reasons for this. First, historically, faculty roles, while including teaching, have not been defined to include assessment. In research universities, this problem is particularly acute. Second, since assessment is a new activity for most faculty, it represents an addition to existing workload. To the extent that faculty are already hard-pressed to fulfill their roles, assessment is met with resistance. Third, while faculty are generally expert in their teaching and research roles, they are not usually as proficient at assessment. As a result, they do not feel at ease when engaged in assessment. Fourth, the reward system, especially in the profession at large, but often, also in the individual college and university, does not value assessment activities.

It follows that if the mandates of accreditation bodies are to be met, these obstacles to faculty involvement must be overcome or reduced. The objectives of this paper are, first, to offer a framework for thinking about possible strategies to increase faculty involvement, and, second, to describe and appraise the approaches of the arts and sciences colleges in two institutions. Both faced a difficult task of motivating faculty to conduct assessment, in part because, in terms of the Carnegie classification, one is Research I, the other is Research II.

A Framework for Generating Approaches to Motivating Faculty

An underlying assumption of this paper is that it is desirable that faculty are motivated to assess student learning, rather than mandated to do so by administrators. A framework that is capable of generating effective policy implications must, therefore, be firmly grounded in motivation theory. Expectancy theory is particularly rich in terms of its implications in this context. In essence, the theory states that individuals are more likely to be motivated when they are able to achieve what is asked of them, when they value the outcomes of the desired behavior, and when they value the rewards for their efforts.

Applied to faculty in the context of assessment, faculty involvement is more likely when faculty are able to assess student learning effectively, when they value the outcomes of assessment, and when they value the rewards for (or are willing to bear the costs of) their efforts. Clearly, in the process of meeting these conditions, the obstacles to involvement enumerated at the outset will become less challenging. Faculty will be prepared to redefine their roles and accord assessment a higher priority; they will be more informed about assessment; and the rewards system will recognize assessment to a greater degree.

Myriad implications for the administration of assessment can be drawn from these very general principles. Rather than list every conceivable option, the approach taken here is to offer examples of strategies that have been tried and tested in two institutions. The first example concerns the approach of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Cincinnati in the period prior to the NCA team visit. The second case study focuses on the College of Letters and Science at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Motivating Faculty Prior to a Team Visit:
The Case of the University of Cincinnati College of Arts and Sciences

The assessment initiative has taken place in the context of a very decentralized university. Each college has been asked to devise its own assessment system. Within the College of Arts and Sciences, each of the 60 graduate and undergraduate programs has been given autonomy to develop its own approach to assessing whether its students are achieving the program goals relating to learning. The decentralized organization of assessment, as well as the fact that the College has approximately 400 faculty members, means that motivating faculty to participate in assessment activities is vital. In accordance with the three principles for motivating faculty, action has been taken to enhance the ability of faculty to engage in assessment, to increase the value of assessment, and to provide rewards or make the costs bearable.

☐ Helping Faculty become Able to Engage in Assessment

Several attempts have been made to educate the faculty about assessment. Generally, responsibility has fallen to the faculty-dominated and -driven College Assessment Steering Committee. At the outset, in July 1994, the College sponsored a one-day, off-campus, retreat for department heads and nascent leaders. The faculty at large were then sent a college-produced pamphlet about assessment. Assessment leaders at the program level received a more detailed question-and-answer document. As time progressed, a loose-leaf assessment manual also was developed for each department. It contains critical documents such as the assessment plans of the university and college, and examples of different assessment approaches. The Committee also offers brown-bag lunches on a variety of assessment topics.

Help is also provided through a consultancy system. The Steering Committee has divided the programs among its faculty members. The faculty visited the departments to ensure that faculty understood assessment and to answer specific questions concerning the writing of assessment plans. Later in the process, the consulting faculty made additional visits to comment on drafts of plans, and to help finesse assessment activities.

☐ Increasing the Value of Assessment

Faculty have become more motivated to assess student learning, not only through sharpening their assessment skills, but also because their appreciation of the intrinsic value of assessment has increased. Initial skepticism of assessment stemmed in part from the sense that it was being imposed from the outside. However, the Dean made it clear from the outset that the College was engaging in assessment, because fostering improvements in programs was "the right thing to do." To be sure, reaccreditation is desired, but assessment is to be conducted on an ongoing basis beyond the team visit. To emphasize the point of internal control, the College is very "hands-off," allowing programs to design their own goals, assessment methods, and feedback loops. Accountability consists of six-monthly reports to the Dean's Office summarizing program goals, evidence, and programmatic changes.

With experience of assessment, many faculty realize the value of assessment data. Most directly, the data can be used for their intended purpose: to inform program and curricular changes. However, in an era of multiple environmental pressures and little time to respond, some programs have used the assessment data in program reviews.

☐ Providing Rewards and Making the Costs Bearable

The reward system has also contributed to faculty motivation. The Chair of the Steering Committee receives a small stipend. Resources have been allocated to provide some secretarial help, to finance refreshments at brown-bag lunches, and to pay for the production of informational materials for programs. This has helped facilitate the leadership of the assessment effort.

At the department level, there are incentives to participate in assessment: resources are allocated, in part, based on involvement in assessment. For the individual faculty member, some departments award merit pay increases based, in part, on service contributions, including in the area of assessment. While not a reward, the educational and consultancy activities of the Steering Committee have reduced the costs of assessment for faculty.

Overall Effectiveness

These strategies have contributed to a higher level of motivation on the part of the faculty. More than one-third have attended an assessment meeting, lunch, or retreat in the last two years. The College has become a leader in the university. Some Steering Committee members have been asked to assist other colleges in the university.

Of course, challenges remain. The diffusion of knowledge concerning assessment is not universal. Not everyone values the outcomes of assessment: some do not agree with the program goals that were negotiated in the program, while others are skeptical of the validity of the results. Assessment still imposes non-negligible costs on faculty. Time is scarce and there is inevitably a cost to the teaching and research effort of the department. Further, some assessment activities, such as surveys, are costly to administer. Nevertheless, significant progress has been made in motivating faculty.

Motivating Faculty Following a Team Visit: The Case of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee College of Letters and Science

The University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee (UWM) began assessment planning in 1994, through a decentralized process that allowed each of the respective colleges and schools to develop its own plan. These plans were subsequently reviewed and approved by the Vice-Chancellor's office. In Spring 1995, the University had its NCA team visit, and the assessment plan received strong endorsement by the evaluation team. However, while it is one thing to get an appropriate assessment plan drawn up and approved by the faculty, it is a much more complicated matter to institutionalize the assessment plan into the fabric of university and faculty life once the NCA evaluation team has gone home and approval received. This is true for several reasons.

First, there is the faculty-held belief that, well before the call came from NCA and others, "we were already doing this." Thus, for some, assessment calls for little more than doing what they have always done. As a result, they believe that little, if any, change is needed. Second, there is the "not invented here" syndrome. For some faculty and departments, the assessment issue did not arise from internal desires/forces within the department; rather, it came from a mix of external departmental forces. As a result, important long-term commitment to these initiatives may be lacking. Once the NCA visit has occurred and approval received, there can be the feeling that "we don't have to be concerned about this," until it's time for the next team visit. Third, there is the reality that assessment is just one of a number of new and emerging issues that compete for faculty and administrative attention. In Wisconsin, this has included, in recent years, enrollment concerns, budgetary cutbacks, loss of faculty positions, increased work-load demands, and guaranteed four-year graduation contracts. All of these have occurred in conjunction with meager salary increases. Together, these factors can become major barriers to implementing successful and rigorous assessment plans and projects.

The College of Letters and Sciences at UWM (24 departments, 670 faculty and staff) has sought to overcome these barriers in several ways. Of primary importance is to integrate assessment into the nature of work that is performed by faculty and staff. That is, assessment must become part of the everyday culture. Indeed, one must get to the point that the term "assessment" is rarely used. Through developing new curriculum reforms that demand and integrate assessment into outcomes and expectations, one does not have to speak about assessment outright, but rather talks about the implementation of the new curriculum and progress achieved.

For example, with strong faculty backing, the L&S College at UWM has moved to develop a freshman seminar program. Freshmen are strongly encouraged to take a freshman seminar with a senior faculty member, in their first and second semester. These seminars are limited to 15 students, and have a strong focus on developing the student's analytical, oral, and written communication skills. Faculty who teach the seminar must go through a four-day workshop/retreat where they receive guidance/advice on a number of subjects from technology in the classroom, to development of oral communication skills and review of a wide assortment of assessment techniques, such as the use of portfolios, poster sessions, and taped in-class performances. In addition, the freshman seminar program itself is formally-evaluated by several faculty members at four different points throughout the year through the use of different evaluation mechanisms (formal surveys, focus groups, and a monthly brown-bag meeting of seminar faculty). Thus, throughout the year, there is constant monitoring, review, and feedback of student, faculty, and programmatic outcomes.

The freshman seminar program is only one instance where assessment has been institutionalized in the curriculum via recent reforms. Other examples include a pre-major requirement of all students (students must meet specific department-set benchmarks before being accepted into a major), a peer mentoring program, and a writing-in-the-major requirement that focuses on writing-to-learn rather than on learning to write. (Here again, faculty must participate in a Writing-across-the-Curriculum (WAC) Workshop, in order to teach an approved "writing intensive" course, and a departmental capstone requirement.)

As a result of these curricular reforms, faculty and departments are forced to assess constantly and monitor the effectiveness of their programs. Thus, while a great deal of monitoring, review, and faculty development constantly take place, one rarely thinks of these activities as connected to simply assessing student outcomes. However, taken together, a very extensive assessment program, which is accepted and embraced by the faculty who have been charged with its implementation, is in place.

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Assessment on a Budget: What Works, What Doesn't

David Wissmann

Introduction

Colleges and universities throughout the world are grappling with the "realities" of assessment programs of student achievement. For many, possibly all, of these institutions, one reality of this experience is that assessment is done "on a budget." This budget is concerned not only with the financial resources of the assessment program, but also is influenced by factors such as limitations in the time and motivation of students and faculty members.

At one level, financial resources present a great limitation to assessment. Many colleges and universities do not have the financial ability to administer nationally normed tests to every student or to create an assessment office, staffed by full-time assessment professionals. Even those institutions that want to use their own forms of assessment (e.g., tests, surveys) may not find the money to develop and implement the assessment methods or analyze the results.

Possibly more limiting are the time and motivation restrictions of the two primary groups of people involved with assessment, students and faculty members. For students, assessment may be viewed as intrusive, "something more to do." Both full-time and part-time students often juggle college life with work and family responsibilities. Assessment, especially when it is added to other college commitments, can be viewed in a negative manner. One of the last things a student wants is more work, especially work that does not have a direct reward (grades) or a direct payment for services.

Faculty have similar time and motivation limitations. Like students, faculty have many competing demands for their time and loyalty. For some, assessment is viewed as "another in a long history of academic fads that will quickly go away" or something imposed by the administration. Even for those faculty who recognize the benefits of assessment, other demands on time and energy may limit support for assessment activities. In addition, many faculty are concerned that assessment results may be "used against them" at times of promotion and tenure.

Together, budgetary limitations in cost, time, and motivation may have serious consequences for an institution's assessment program. Specifically, both the validity of the assessment methods and the reliability of the results may be affected negatively. For example, do these limitations lead us to choose of assessment methods that are easy to administer but are invalid measures of student achievement objectives or outcomes valued by the institution? Also, do limitations in time and motivation alter the reliability of student responses to an assessment tool or the completion of an evaluation tool by a faculty member or other evaluator of student work?

In the remainder of this paper, these limitations to assessment programs will be related to five commonly used assessment methods. The paper will then discuss six ideas that may help minimize the effects of these limitations on assessment programs.

Budgetary Limitations and Assessment Methods

Among the most common types of assessment used today are standardized exams, institutionally-created exams, surveys, portfolios, and performance evaluations. In Appendix A, these five methods of assessment are related to the budgetary limitations noted above.

Standardized exams, though often easily obtained through commercial sources, typically present budgetary limitations in cost and student time and motivation. Institutionally-created exams often are affected by the same limitations, with additional costs of exam creation.

Surveys, obtained through either commercial or institutionally-created sources, have either purchase or creation costs and are heavily dependent on the time and motivation limitations of respondents. These limitations can be especially problematic when off-campus respondents, such as alumni and employers, are used.

Portfolios and performance evaluations are greatly affected by the time and motivation limitations of the evaluators. Faculty and off-campus evaluators exhibit a wide variety in both the quantity and quality of evaluations of student achievement through tools such as student portfolios and performance evaluations.

What Can Be Done?

In this climate of "budgetary" restrictions, how can we assess student achievement effectively without bankrupting the finances, time resources, and motivation of our students, faculty, and institution? The following six ideas may help balance our needs for assessment information with the "budgetary" limitations.

1. Use assessment methods that **"double-dip"** (such as a student writing sample that also measures critical thinking).
2. Utilize representative **samples** of the student body.
3. Use the **classroom** (and, at times, course requirements) as the setting for some assessment activities.
4. Take advantage of **archival data,** when available.
5. Utilize **faculty volunteers** to serve as role models, especially during the early stages of implementing new assessment methods.
6. Have a **"Small Is Beautiful"** philosophy in both outcomes development and assessment goals.

These ideas, used individually or collectively, can help an assessment program improve its effectiveness while minimizing the budgetary limitations of cost, time, and motivation. The third column of Appendix A applies these ideas to commonly used types of assessment.

Double-dipping is not a new idea. Many current assessment tools are intended to measure more than one facet of student achievement. For example, a freshman essay used during orientation can be created to measure both critical thinking and writing. But double-dipping can be viewed in another way. Double-dipping can be achieved by using class assignments as a form of assessment of general education outcomes. Portfolios may be the best example of this type of philosophy. For example, many materials submitted in portfolio systems were originally developed as class assignments. Limitation in both student time and motivation can be minimized when previously created materials are used. Alumni directory surveys can also be a double-dipping source. In addition to the usual questions about updating personal and employment information, alumni surveys can assess the achievement of general education or program goals, such as civic responsibility and life-long learning.

The logic of sampling can also be applied to assessment. Administering a standardized test to a random sample of 500 students, for example, is much less costly than administering that same test to a total student population of 5,000 or more. In addition, a random sample of the portfolios submitted by all graduating students in an institution will minimize the time and motivation limitations of faculty or other evaluators and, subsequently, lead to more reliable results.

The classroom can be the ideal location for assessment efforts, especially when the limitations of student time and motivation are considered. Using the double-dipping idea, the classroom can be an accessible location for course requirements that can also be used for assessment of general education or program outcomes. One example of this approach is the use of Freshman Seminar and Senior Capstone courses to assess student skills and achievement. Another example is the use of "placement" style tests or writing assignments in mathematics and composition courses.

Archival sources of data often are one of the most accessible, yet least used, sources of assessment information. For example, transcripts of graduates can be especially helpful when one desires to make connections with the attitudes and behavior of alumni. In addition, the use of archival sources can minimize the budgetary limitations of student time and motivation to a level of near-zero impact.

Faculty volunteers can be an invaluable resource for an assessment program. Volunteers often are more motivated and more willing to give of their time in the interest of improving their institution and their students. Faculty volunteers are effective as role models to encourage their peers to accept assessment activities as a part of their courses and institutional responsibilities, thus minimizing faculty time and motivation limitations to assessment, in general.

A "Small Is Beautiful" philosophy can help minimize "assessment on a budget" limitations. For example, the author's institution has 37 different objectives for its general education core. The realities of assessing 37 different objectives can be overwhelming. Cost, time, and motivation limitations are minimized when a small number of objectives are considered. This same philosophy is appropriate at the level of individual majors or programs. Finally, a "small is beautiful" philosophy is noteworthy when determining yearly assessment goals and activities. Focusing attention on one or two institutional objectives each year has several intrinsic advantages.

Conclusion

The author is convinced that many assessment programs today face serious problems that can be minimized. The ideas presented in this paper are a step in that process. The author believes that a combination of creative thinking and utilization of appropriate assessment techniques can reduce assessment limitations such as cost, time, and motivation.

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Assessment on a Budget: What Works, What Doesn't

Appendix

Type of Assessment	Limitations	Ideas
Standardized exams	Cost Student time Student motivation	Double-dipping Sampling Classroom settings Archival data Faculty volunteers Small is beautiful
Institutionally-created exams	**Cost of creation** **Student time** **Student motivation**	**Double-dipping** **Sampling** **Classroom settings** **Archival data** **Faculty volunteers** **Small is beautiful**
Surveys	Cost Student time Student motivation	Double-dipping Sampling Classroom settings Archival data Faculty volunteers Small is beautiful
Portfolios	**Faculty time** **Faculty motivation**	**Double-dipping** **Sampling** **Faculty volunteers** **Small is beautiful**
Performance evaluations	Faculty time Faculty motivation	Double-dipping Sampling Faculty volunteers Small is beautiful

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Measuring Academic Achievement Longitudinally

Judith Neppel
Carol J. Buck

Northwest Technical College (NTC) is the largest two-year technical institution in Minnesota. It was formed in 1992 with the merger of five technical colleges. It serves the population in the northwest/north central region of the state. The mission of the college is education for employment. At the time of the merger, the development of a broad-based assessment plan was begun to provide uniform procedures throughout the college and to ensure the comprehensive accountability to its constituency. The merger of five culturally-diverse organizations, located in a geographically disperse, sparsely populated, urban and rural area, further complicated the efforts to develop a single, uniformly applied assessment practice. Since these were not new institutions, but rather ones with their own history, culture, and climate, they each brought to the merger a significantly different philosophy and practice.

Further, NTC awards Associate of Applied Science degrees in partnership with five additional higher education institutions in northwest Minnesota that provide the required general education coursework for these degrees. These higher education institutions are community colleges, state universities, and the University of Minnesota-Crookston. Each of these institutions brought to this partnership its historic beliefs and values about collaborating with technical colleges. The merger of the community colleges, state universities, and technical colleges was legislated; the requirement for the technical colleges to partner with other higher education institutions to provide general education coursework was also legislated.

The newly-formed college, NTC, was simultaneously preparing for an initial accreditation visit by the North Central Association (NCA). A newly-merged institution, preparation for an on-site, and developing a uniform, broad-based assessment plan—taken together these elements would appear to be an insurmountable challenge; but, in fact, the simultaneous occurrence provided the momentum for sweeping institutional improvement. The development of the assessment plan was guided by the NCA criteria, which served as a road map to facilitate the assessment plan development. The preparation for the team visit served as the impetus to implement and refine the assessment plan.

The NTC Assessment Plan is divided into four areas.

☐ **Pre-Enrollment**

This area takes the student from the initial contact with the college through course registration. The components of this area are focused on helping students direct and maximize the efficiency of their educational objectives by assessing their basic skills, providing aptitude inventory assessment career counseling, and providing directed academic advising.

☐ **Enrollment**

This area takes the student from the initial enrollment in a program through completion of all coursework necessary to meet graduation requirements. The components of this area are focused on student academic achievement and include pre-program assessment, course assessment, and post-program assessment. The framework for the student academic achievement assessment is based on the program outcomes, which are measurable performance objectives that identify the knowledge, skills, and affective behavior necessary to meet employer expectations. The program outcomes are designed by faculty in each program in conjunction with business/industry, through a task analysis process, which identifies the specific expectations of the employers. The process identifies the affective, cognitive, and psychomotor skills required of a program graduate. Further, the task analysis process is the means by which industry-validated curriculum is designed, assessed, and proceeds in a continuous improvement cycle.

☐ **Post-Enrollment**

The components of this area are focused on longitudinal assessment of the levels of satisfaction of graduates with their education at NTC and levels of satisfaction of employers of the graduate/employee, based on program outcomes. The program faculty and advisory committees receive the survey results. Advisory committee members are appointed by the college and possess the discipline expertise to evaluate curriculum and functional components in each program area. They provide their expert opinion to facilitate the continuous improvement process. The program faculty and advisory committees jointly review the survey results.

☐ **Institutional**

The components of this area are focused on assessment of the climate and the effectiveness measures necessary to ensure that the work environment is conducive to providing quality educational services in an customer-friendly manner.

Northwest Technical College recognized the importance of achieving NCA accreditation, for the benefit of our students. Accreditation makes a statement to the world that the institution has met established standards and has become a partner with other approved higher education institutions, nationally. Initially, the strategic plan for the institution called for A^3—Alignment, Assessment, and Accreditation. Alignment required that the duplicated programs across the five campuses create like curricula. Assessment expected the development of a broad-based, long-range assessment plan to ensure uniform assessment practices. Accreditation signified the importance of achieving successful initial accreditation from NCA. Achieving these strategic directions came as a result of an identified need to create a single entity that was positioned for meeting the future needs of the student and employer. Upon this foundation of A^3 we have been able to build a dynamic, agile, collaborative, educational institution that is poised to meet the changing demands of the student customer while improving the standards of educational achievement.

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Fostering Excellence in Teaching and Learning Through a University/ Community College Collaboration

Karla Brown

After more than a decade of discussion of and attention to assessment, the focus seems to be turning from assessment primarily for accountability purposes to assessment as ongoing improvement. Several presenters last summer at the National Assessment and Quality Conference in Washington, D.C., commented on the growing consensus that the ultimate purpose of assessment efforts is and should be to lead to improvement.

I have been involved in the assessment initiative at my institution since its inception. Like many colleges, we began talking about assessment at the North Central Association's urging. Hawkeye Community College happened to be due for a self-study at about the time that NCA mandated having a plan for the assessment of student academic achievement. Just by chance, I ended up as co-chair of the subcommittee dealing with Criterion Three and was therefore charged with producing our assessment plan.

Even I had initial reluctance and resistance to the very idea of assessment because I was then defining it as only about accountability. I found myself in the unenviable position of having to create and "sell" to my colleagues something that I was still unsure of but had overall doubts about myself. However, as a faculty member, I got excited and enthused about assessment's potential to lead to positive change when I began to re-envision it as first and foremost about improvement after encountering the classroom assessment approach championed by K. Patricia Cross and Thomas Angelo. I believe that all assessment should ultimately lead to greater self-knowledge and self-reflection, whether at the level of individual faculty members, programs, or institutions—that it should help us "know ourselves" more fully so that we can get better at what we do.

Sometimes it seemed that I was working against the tide in conceiving of assessment as primarily about improvement. Particularly in discussions with campus administrators but sometimes even in reading NCA documents, the mindset or world-view tended to focus on the accountability dimensions almost exclusively. I had my perspective occasionally affirmed and reinforced in sessions at assessment conferences, particularly at the national level, but my conviction would falter when so many seemed to see it in different terms.

After several years of struggling with the ongoing challenge of getting faculty enthused about and involved in assessment activities and, ultimately, of creating an assessment mindset throughout our institution, a new Teaching and Learning Center initiative at Hawkeye is helping to provide a framework to foster that and help make it happen. We are now able to offer, through the Continuing Education arm of a local university, classes in peer review of teaching, classroom assessment, and the development of a teaching portfolio. The inherent values I first saw potential for in assessment turn out to be equally true of the other two activities as well. I came to assessment first and teaching portfolios last, but it was when I read two works about teaching portfolios that I came to realize how much the three activities had in common.

The use of classroom assessment, the process of peer review of teaching, and/or the development of a teaching portfolio can do the following for teachers:

- ◇ help them articulate more explicitly what they do in teaching and why they do it;
- ◇ reaffirm for them and others at their institutions that student learning is the center of what we should be about as educational institutions;

- ◇ prompt meaningful conversations about and explorations into teaching and learning;
- ◇ lead to useful insights and more thoughtful, reflective practice in the classroom;
- ◇ serve as formative faculty development activities with the promise of ongoing professional growth;
- ◇ offer an opportunity to celebrate, value, and affirm teaching and learning;
- ◇ provide a more coherent, systematic way to examine and enhance teaching and learning;
- ◇ help create a "culture of professional inquiry about good teaching"; and
- ◇ renew the excitement and energy of faculty.

The aspects of assessment that first engaged me as a faculty member are precisely the qualities that peer review of teaching and the development of teaching portfolios share in common. The process of doing all or any of the three helps engage faculty at a deeper level in the teaching/learning equation, helps focus attention more deliberately on the complexities and challenges of teaching, and helps guide teaching practice in more productive ways. I now see all three as integrated strands that help lead to Donald Schon's notion of reflective practice and Ernest Boyer's call for "a scholarship of teaching." Teaching should be more collaborative, more public, and more reflective than it typically is, and peer review, teaching portfolios, and/or classroom assessment can help make it so. The ongoing pursuit of excellence in the educational process should be the ultimate aim of assessment; wedding assessment with peer review and teaching portfolios is a first step in achieving that kind of transformation in how we do what we do.

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As Clear as Mud? The Difference between Assessing Institutional Effectiveness and Student Academic Achievement

Sue Kater
Cathy Lucius

Introduction

Sometimes it all seem about as clear as mud—institutional effectiveness, student academic achievement, outcomes assessment, evaluation, institutional assessment. The terms are so common now in educational literature, and so often used interchangeably that the lines between them begin to blur even amongst those of us who use them almost daily. And if the terms sometimes appear muddled and confusing to those of us who use them regularly, imagine how they must seem to those of our co-workers, peers, and students to whom we are trying to enthuse and involve in the process of assessment, who are unfamiliar with them.

As co-chairs of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee, we realized that before we could proceed any further in promoting assessment efforts on our campus, our campus needed to be able to speak a common language and agree on some basic terms. After all, we don't expect our students to succeed in calculus until they have learned some fundamental mathematical principles. In the same light we needed to be sure that we all had some fundamental understanding of the differences between the assessment of institutional effectiveness and student academic achievement.

During the Fall 1996 semester it was a goal of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee to take the message of assessment to everyone on our campus—students, faculty, and staff. We were involved in the process of revising our plan to assess student academic achievement and realized that for many individuals, the differences between assessing institutional effectiveness and student academic achievement were unclear. This lack of clarity prompted us to put together a presentation that highlighted some of the differences between institutional effectiveness and student academic achievement.

The North Central Association has called for specific plans for the assessment of student academic achievement that are "distinct and able to stand independent of interrelated and equally valuable programs for the evaluation of components of institutional effectiveness other than student learning" (Lopez, 1996, p. 4). It has been our experience that this easily understood, replicable presentation helped our staff understand the difference between the two, and how their departments or programs fit into our overall assessment plan.

Background

GateWay Community College is an urban community college, located in the heart of Phoenix, Arizona, one of the ten campuses that make up the Maricopa Community College District. The Maricopa Colleges collectively enroll more than 200,000 students per year. Each campus operates independently under one Governing Board, with the support of our District Support Services office. Our campus, GateWay, has an average headcount of approximately 6,000 students during the Fall and Spring terms. The majority of our students are part-time, enrolled in nursing, computing, health care, and trades courses.

Our last NCA visit was in 1989-90, with a specific plan for the documentation of student academic achievement accepted in 1992. Since then we have been successful in implementing some components of the plan (a comprehensive program review has been in place for five years), while other components are now understood to fall under the auspices of institutional effectiveness.

In the continuous improvement process, it was concluded that we need to revise our plan to assess student academic achievement since we now have a much greater understanding of the difference between assessing student academic achievement and institutional effectiveness. It's not as much of a moving target now as it once was.

The Presentation

GateWay utilizes a mission-based assessment program, so during our presentations we first discuss the college's mission and goals. This reinforced where our outcomes measures originate. We define institutional effectiveness as an analysis of how well and to what extent we are performing our mission and achieving our goals. Then we introduce the topic of assessing student academic achievement as an assessment of student outcomes—cognitive, behavioral, and affective learning. Most people seem to understand easily NCA's phraseology, which states that institutional effectiveness is the evaluation of those parts of the college that *enable* students to learn; and student academic achievement is the evaluation of what and how much students have *learned* (Lopez, 1996).

We continued the presentation by giving some examples of assessments that we have used, and asking the audience to decide whether they were measures of institutional effectiveness or student academic achievement. With faculty groups, we also discussed direct, indirect, and non-measures of student learning and then asked the audience to also define to which category each example belonged.

In presentations to faculty, we provided some examples of Angelo and Cross's (1993) classroom assessment techniques. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee will try to promote the use of these techniques by providing rewards for those instructors who choose to try a technique during the Spring semester. We also demonstrated some form of classroom assessment during each presentation we make.

Classroom assessment is an important building block for the assessment of student learning on our campus. We felt it was a good first step in outcomes assessment and would be especially appealing to those faculty who might otherwise be reluctant to participate. Classroom assessment techniques vary from simple to administer and evaluate to the more complex. They can take as little or as much faculty and instructional time as the faculty member sees fit. Participation in utilizing them is voluntary, and the results can remain with the instructor and class or be shared in the assessment summaries by department or division.

Cecilia Lopez of the North Central Association has recently prepared a paper that supports the use of classroom research and classroom assessment in the assessment of student learning. In "Classroom Research and Regional Accreditation: Common Ground" (June, 1996), she articulates some specific suggestions for linking classroom assessment and classroom research to the assessment of student learning at the program level. For many of us, obtaining information about our students at the course level is easy to do; the challenge is to tie together the larger pieces of the puzzle, assessment at the program level, into meaningful data that can be used to improve student learning. For those faculty who are already adept at utilizing classroom assessment, the challenge is to use classroom research methodology and results in programmatic assessment.

To close the presentation, we wanted to paint the broader picture of assessment. Why the emphasis on assessment? It needed to be communicated as more than an NCA mandate. In fact it is a significant part of our continuous improvement process. We tell our constituents that we are "the college that cares" and realize that we need to be able to demonstrate that we are doing our best to keep the promises that we make.

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Assessing Moving Targets: The Use of Panel Studies to Better Understand the Barriers and Bridges to Student Persistence–Year Four of a Six-Year Study

William S. Johnson
Shelly A. Potts
Denice Ward Hood
Steven S. Miller

Introduction

Assessment has received considerable attention in higher education over the past several years. Are we doing what we say we are doing? Are we doing what we think we should be doing? Accrediting agencies are looking more carefully at student outcomes and student academic achievement rather than simply at "inputs vs. outputs." Assessment is moving away from a quantitative head-count of graduates toward more qualitative, multi-method, student success models.

Arizona State University (ASU), a research institution with approximately 43,000 students, located in metropolitan Phoenix, has faced a unique challenge in terms of assessing the experiences of its undergraduate students. ASU's student population represents an inverted pyramid. That is, the smallest class is the entering freshman class, while the largest class is the senior class. Additionally, the student body is "aging" and is highly mobile between the University and its feeder community colleges in the area.

In an effort to understand better the movement through such a dynamic system, the University implemented a longitudinal study designed to track and assess this "moving target" and to identify the barriers and bridges to successful university experiences. This study, called **PULSE** (Project to Understand Learning and Student Experiences), was first implemented in fall 1993, following which new PULSE panels were identified and tracked in 1995 and 1996.

What Is PULSE?

The purpose of these **PULSE** panels is twofold:

1) to further the understanding of factors that inhibit and encourage students' timely academic progress to graduation, and
2) to provide the University with information that can be used to assist students in successful completion of their programs of study.

Periodic contacts with the panels "take the pulse" of the campus community with regard to student involvement, commitment, academic and student services, experiences, and current topics and events, as students advance through their college experience at ASU. One critical way to understand the dynamics of the educational experience is to examine it through student eyes. The PULSE panels facilitate this process.

Data Collection

The first phase of each **PULSE** study involved the collection of baseline data from all new freshmen (N= approximately 3,000) enrolled in the Fall, first-year composition course via the *First Year Student Survey*. Next, a panel of approximately 500 freshmen was randomly selected from among the Fall, entering student population (1993). In some cases, purposeful over-sampling was used to ensure longitudinal representation of particularly underrepresented groups. Subsequent panels (1995, 1996) consisted of the entire population of students who completed the survey.

During each year of the six-year study, qualitative and quantitative data are gathered from the panel to investigate barriers and bridges to retention. Paper surveys, telephone interviews, and focus groups "take the pulse" of student attitudes and opinions at critical points during the academic year. Panel students are contacted once each semester and invited to comment upon their campus experiences. In this manner, students have the opportunity to evaluate university services such as advising and registration and to offer opinions on issues like intergroup relations and involvement in activities on and off campus. Secondary data, available through existing student databases (e.g., hours completed, major), also are collected.

While the University always has been concerned with the number of students who start but do not finish their education at ASU, there is a growing interest in better understanding the dynamics and factors that lead students to drop-out, stop-out, transfer, or to be academically dismissed. In order to better understand why students do not persist, students who interrupt their enrollment are contacted at least once to collect exit data.

PULSE and Outcomes Assessment

Outcomes assessment at ASU begins with first-time, first-term freshmen and continues after graduation. Because of the complexities (e.g., large size, large non-traditional population, small freshman class, and large transfer population) of the institution, greater efforts are made to understand the differing experiences of these and other populations. In this context, PULSE is one assessment activity among many. For example, ASU conducts yearly student opinion surveys, graduating senior surveys, and alumni surveys. All of these research efforts are coordinated to complement each other and are designed to provide a holistic view of students' experiences while attending ASU as well as the long-term impact of attending the University.

What have we learned about conducting longitudinal research? By contacting panel members each semester, we are able to learn about the "barriers" and "bridges" to success, "as students encounter them." Typically, when seniors are asked to reflect upon college by completing a comprehensive survey at the time of graduation, they focus solely on a few outstanding (positive or negative) instances and fail to give a realistic description of their overall university experience.

Frequent contacts with panel members enable us to gain detailed and timely evaluations of university programs and services. Such feedback is crucial for tailoring programs to meet the needs of our students. Also, students are much more likely to offer feedback when changes can occur while they are still enrolled rather than after they graduate.

Although the study's initial design incorporated various quantitative and qualitative data collection methods (mailed questionnaires, focus groups, and telephone interviews), panel members now are contacted solely by telephone. This change has increased considerably the response rate for PULSE surveys. Students are more willing to respond to a brief telephone inquiry than to complete and return a paper survey. Most recently, interviews conducted using computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI) software, have both facilitated the speed of data entry and decreased the frequency of errors.

What Impact Has PULSE Had on the Quality of Education at ASU?

Although a relatively new project, PULSE has had a noticeable impact on the quality of education at Arizona State University. PULSE data have contributed to revisions of the first-year mathematics curriculum and advising services as well as to modification of student success programs (Campus Match, Freshman Year Experience, UNI 100). Most recently, panel members have responded to questions regarding campus climate and intergroup relations. This information is being used to develop a diversity training course for university teaching assistants.

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Assessing Student Academic Achievement Using Advance Skill Management Tools

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Introduction

Of growing concern among institutions of higher education, is the perception that an increasing number of students who have earned baccalaureate degrees are entering the workplace with little understanding of how to apply their knowledge to work related circumstances. A sixteen member panel, referred to as The Wingspread Group, convened to study higher education in America and concluded with a December 1993 report: "Traditionally, the acquisition of skills essential to life and work has been considered a by-product of study, not something requiring explicit attention on campus. We know of only a handful of the nation's colleges and universities that have developed curricular approaches similar to, for example, the list of critical skills developed by the Secretary of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS)." "Higher education and the society it serves face a fork in the road. Either educators and other Americans raise their sights... or we all face the certain and unpleasant prospect of national decline. No one can look squarely at the quality of our undergraduate education, and its graduates, and come to a more optimistic conclusion." (Wingspread Group on Higher Education, 1993)

Over the past decade, postsecondary educational institutions have increasingly attended to the demands from various constituencies, (i.e., legislative bodies, employers, parents, and advisory groups), to address the ability of students to acquire effective general citizenship and employability skills. Terminology for this area of learning varies, and includes general outcomes, abilities, curricular threads, and core components. Skills generally included in such areas are communication across the disciplines, critical thinking, problem solving, social interaction and teamwork, global perspectives, diversity, effective citizenship, responsibility, ethical sensibility, or similar topics.

The University of Minnesota Crookston (UMC) and Valley City State University (VCSU) have undertaken separate initiatives concentrating on these essential areas of learning. Both Universities have identified core elements of their curriculum on which to focus. Both are using ADVANCE skill management tools based on the SCANS research (Secretaries Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills) for their assessment framework. These Universities are among the first in the nation to provide notebook computers to all full-time students as a primary vehicle for instructional delivery. Student performance in the SCANS process skills will be managed through the use of SKILL COMMAND software by ADVANCE.

Institutional Context and Background—University of Minnesota Crookston

The University of Minnesota Crookston (UMC) was established 30 years ago, offering associate degrees in agriculture, business, and home economics. In 1992, the Board of Regents approved the offering of selected baccalaureate degrees, with a focus on applied undergraduate instruction and research in agriculture, business, environmental sciences and human resource development, and appropriate interdisciplinary studies.

UMC provides a University link to the region for technology transfer and outreach, with emphasis on meeting the needs of a rural populace who require lifelong learning and retraining in order to capture opportunities that maximize their existing resources and strengths.

A feature of the campus is that all full-time students are provided with a notebook computer, enabling them to access and send information world-wide, complete class assignments, analyze data, develop and deliver multimedia presentations, and enhance communications with instructors, peer work groups, or campus organizations via e-mail. UMC was recently selected by IBM as one of 25 colleges and universities around the world in piloting the IBM Global Campus, an education and business framework to redesign learning, teaching, and administrative functions.

The strategic plan for UMC outlines strategies to guide the development of programs, focus on customers and their needs, deliver quality products and services, seek out and establish collaborative partnerships, incorporate technology, and establish accountability for delivering the outcomes sought by customers.

☐ Introduction

As an institution, UMC has responded minimally by noting the concern, assuming or assuring that such learning is attained while the student is completing traditional subject matter course work, or incorporating a few additional learner outcomes in some courses. However, assessment of these core components has proven difficult to design and evaluate, especially if the components are leveled. Furthermore once an assessment procedure is established, several related procedural questions arise:

1. How is it incorporated into a student's progress toward degree completion?
2. Are there levels of progress to be attained?
3. Is it reflected in regular course grades along with subject matter knowledge and grade point average or maintained as a separate track and transcript?
4. Does failure to attain acceptable levels in such outcomes prevent a student from graduating?

☐ Process

The University of Minnesota, Crookston began addressing these questions in 1993, by incorporating core components into the college bulletin and by attaching relevant core components to individual learner outcomes in each course. A pilot project, cooperatively by UMC faculty, Advance Educational Spectrums, and area Work Force Centers (previously Job Service), explored some initial performance assessment techniques on selected core components. This pilot utilized the SCANS (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills) approach, expanding on similar SCANS skills pilot programs in area K-12 systems. In addition 10 faculty have attended various national conferences on learner outcome assessment, to provide a foundation from which to build. An Assessment Working Group was named in 1996 to coordinate and explore further research on and implementation of core components at the Crookston campus.

The following task areas are being coordinated by the Assessment Working Group during the 1996-97 academic year:

1. Complete the revision and leveling of core components.
2. Development of a freshman orientation course with an introduction to SCANS assessment and the basics of electronic portfolio construction.
3. Development of core component leveling based on course content.
4. Development of assessment instruments that can be used across the curriculum.
5. Explore systems of data collection and a core component data center.

☐ Objectives

To address these areas a plan has been developed to achieve the following:

1. Clarify, refine, and integrate core components into the curriculum, utilizing potential models appropriate to UMC mission and programs.
2. Increase awareness and knowledge of core component assessment strategies and instruments by UMC faculty.
3. Develop methods of assessment of components that reflect uniformity across campus.
4. Improve the supportive infrastructure for core component implementation, assessment, record keeping, and data dissemination.
5. Increase awareness, participation, and responsibility of UMC students regarding their core component requirements for graduation.
6. Expand the collaboration with other postsecondary institutions, Work Force Centers, employers, and K-12 systems relevant to core component implementation.

Institutional Context and Background—Valley City State University

Valley City State University is a four-year, public liberal arts institution that has an enrollment of 1,100 students. The campus is located at Valley City, North Dakota, and is one of eleven higher education institutions (six four-year and five two-year) in the North Dakota University System. The two largest academic programs on campus include teacher education and business administration, each with approximately 280 majors. The community of Valley City is rural with a population of 7,600.

Valley City State received a FIPSE grant (Funds for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education) in 1993. The grant application was written by the North Dakota University System and VCSU was asked to implement the project to "serve as a laboratory for the North Dakota University System in reforming undergraduate education." The first year of the grant consisted of diverse innovative teaching strategies by faculty who were allowed to use a number of different teaching strategies. In reality, the grand scheme of the project seemed unrealistic to the VCSU campus as well as to Program Officers in Washington.

During the second year of grant activity, Dave Bass was named Project Director. Working with a campus advisory council of 12 (equal numbers of faculty, staff and students) the council focused on learner-centered education and changing the campus environment. During spring semester 1995 the FIPSE Advisory Council recommended to the faculty association that assessment become the focus of grant activities. During the summer of 1995 a sub-committee of the council worked to develop an ability-based assessment model that was approved in principal by the faculty association during fall semester 1995. The foundation of this model was a strong philosophical belief that we wanted to help students document what they could do with the content knowledge they were learning in their classes.

While the FIPSE Advisory Council had reviewed literature about changing needs of assessment in higher education, early work on the assessment model focused on programs at Alverno College (Milwaukee, WI) and Central Missouri State. Because of the closer geographical relationship with Alverno, that institution ultimately became an important influence. Twenty faculty, staff, and students from VCSU attended visitation days and assessment training conferences at Alverno. Two Alverno faculty visited Valley City and served as consultants during the 1995-96 academic year.

In April 1996, the Project Director of the FIPSE grant received information about the assessment model used at ADVANCE Educational Spectrums in Detroit Lakes, MN. A meeting was held in April between the project director and the CEO of the ADVANCE company. In May, just prior to final test week, the CEO of ADVANCE met with the Vice-President for Academic Affairs and key faculty on the VCSU campus. Feedback from faculty who attended this session indicated a strong desire to continue the relationship with ADVANCE.

In July 1996 the CEO of ADVANCE delivered a three-day training session for nine VCSU faculty. The session focused on the ADVANCE assessment model and its research based on job profiling and performance indicators for both content and process skills. In addition, participants spent one day training with the ADVANCE Skill Command Software.

During a pre-service faculty session just prior to the start of fall semester 1996, the CEO of ADVANCE met with all VCSU faculty. He delivered an overview of the ADVANCE program, demonstrated the software, and discussed how the ADVANCE program could be integrated with the existing assessment model VCSU had already established.

The CEO of ADVANCE continued to serve as a consultant to VCSU during the fall semester and spent an additional two days delivering a workshop to faculty just prior to the beginning of spring semester 1997. In December 1996 the VCSU Division of Education and Psychology participated in a job profiling task where they identified SCANS skill levels considered essential for a beginning teacher. This work will be replicated by other academic divisions during the 1997 spring semester.

Implementation plans for spring semester include a pilot project in which eight faculty have volunteered to introduce the assessment model and the software to students they teach. Each faculty member selected one class, one ability they will emphasize, and one SCANS Skill that is packaged within that ability group. While the implementation phase is just beginning, faculty have continued to meet weekly during the semester. They report strong student interest in using this opportunity to demonstrate process skills that will enhance content knowledge being learned in the class.

Ultimately, the project will include more faculty next year after the pilot groups are able to make recommendations about their results. Fortunately, the ADVANCE software is on our local server so all faculty can access it at any time. Even more fortunately, since we are a notebook campus and every student has a notebook computer, students have access to the software through the student version.

The ADVANCE Performance Assessment Framework

The ADVANCE performance assessment model originates from a thorough examination of performance. In 1989, Elizabeth Dole, then Secretary of Labor, commissioned a study to determine what skills Americans would have to possess to succeed in the new high performance workplace. The work of this commission, entitled the Secretaries Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), has since been widely recognized as the most comprehensive research yet conducted on the subject. Published in four parts beginning in 1991, the findings revealed a set of seventeen foundation elements that include basic skills, thinking skills, and personal qualities, and twenty workplace competencies that include managing resources, managing information, working with systems, and working with technology. These 37 skill elements were identified as essential to performance in all of the fifty occupational categories examined in the study. Other credible research, including High Skills or Low Wages, has identified essentially the same elements as keys to success.

Because the SCANS skill elements are common to literally all occupations as well as academic endeavors, they are characterized by ADVANCE as process skills. When applied contextually, they combine with technical or content knowledge to determine performance. At the heart of the ADVANCE performance assessment model is the notion of "uncoupling" process skills from the contextual application, and assessing the process skill used in the task independently from the content of the task. To accomplish this, ADVANCE has developed a two-dimensional assessment model for the 37 SCANS skill elements.

ADVANCE assembled an assessment task force comprised of secondary and postsecondary educators that defined performance indicators for each of the 37 SCANS skills. These indicators guide the correct use of the skill, the first dimension of assessment. Once learners begin to recognize what these skills are, and use them correctly to perform tasks, they improve their performance by cognitively applying them to tasks of increasing difficulty. The second dimension of assessment lies in measuring the difficulty of the task to which the skill is applied.

To assist in this second dimension of assessment, ADVANCE has developed and validated an instrument for identifying levels of difficulty in each of the 37 skills. Using Bloom's cognitive taxonomy, Krathwahl's affective taxonomy, and Simpson's psychomotor taxonomy as screens to examine characteristics of the tasks published in the original SCANS research, ADVANCE developed a template identifying five levels of difficulty in each of the SCANS skills. This template is used to measure the difficulty of any task. This may apply to tasks associated with a job or with an academic project. It is also used to measure the difficulty of the academic curriculum and to measure the performance of students as it relates to the SCANS skills.

In an academic setting, assessment of these SCANS process skills involves first using the performance indicators to assess proper use of the skill, then using the template to measure the level of difficulty, or the rigor, of the tasks to which the skill is applied (the curriculum). In this manner, leveling is a function of academic rigor as defined by the three taxonomies that guided the development of the template.

Universities are able to package SCANS skills into "Abilities" or "Core Competencies," as VCSU and UMC are doing, selecting the specific skills that are most relevant to their objectives. Faculty then apply the template to their curriculum and pedagogy to map out the incidence and level of difficulty of the SCANS skills in their selected ability or competence packages. This process examines the tasks that students are asked to do as they complete the course, and identifies the level of difficulty of the SCANS skills included in the task. In this manner, the university can be assured that learners are exposed to their competencies at a level that is appropriate to their objectives.

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Chapter IV

Program/Classroom Assessment

Measuring Moving Targets....◆....◆....◆

102nd Annual Meeting of the North Central Association
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
April 19-22, 1997 • Hyatt Regency Chicago

Enhancing Explanatory Power in Program Assessments– Without Statistical Psychobabble

William E. Roweton

"Drawing false positive or false negative conclusions about causal hypothesis is the essence of [compromised] internal validity."—Thomas D. Cook & Donald T. Campbell (1979)

Introduction

The purpose of this session is to provide practical conceptual insights about the relationships between testing-designs and data-interpretation. This presentation is targeted for academicians who are not statistically trained but who are, nevertheless, involved in institutional assessment activities.

This session demonstrates—without statistical jargon—conceptual puzzles-of-interpretation common to educational program evaluations. To stimulate conversation, hypothetical "results" from a typical program-assessment will be evaluated by volunteer "assessment-teams" from the audience. In discussion, common threats to data-interpretation following inappropriate testing-designs will be illustrated.

Program Assessment Activity Model

With instructional-program evaluations, colleges and universities proceed, too often reluctantly, along a multi-phased cycle of assessment activities (see Figure 1). Entry into assessment typically begins with the *development* of a plan: measurement mandates enumerated; affected programs and personnel specified; and action-plans drafted. The action-plan names participants, instruments, procedures, and testing designs. This testing methodology, once *implemented*, generates data to be collected, analyzed, interpreted, and, eventually, *applied*. In this final phase, results are summarized, disseminated, and utilized. Data (e.g., student performance) pertinent to measurable instructional objectives indicate, we assume, how effectively instructional programs perform. Through effective application, programs improve. Development, implementation, application—however schematized, assessment challenges postsecondary institutions, logistically and conceptually.

☐ Goal of Program Assessment

Effective program assessments estimate the influence of program qualities (e.g., classroom instruction) on student learning. Do not factors like the professor's teaching skill and knowledge, classroom resources, student motivation determine substantially what students eventually learn? Therefore, to carry this reasoning forward, effective program assessments establish quantitatively the degree of relationship (causality?) between instruction and student performance. Perhaps. Unfortunately, straightforward data-interpretation can be elusive.

Program Assessments: A Study of Reality

This session focuses on the inevitable influence of effective and ineffective testing-designs, one key component of Step 3 (in Figure 1), on Step 6, the interpretation of results. To illustrate, session attendees, working as small assessment-teams, will receive summarized results from a hypothetical undergraduate program assessment report. Given student performance data, assessment-teams will decide whether or not the results portrayed in the text, graphics, and tables "prove" that instruction actually enhances student-performance. The example will be authentic.

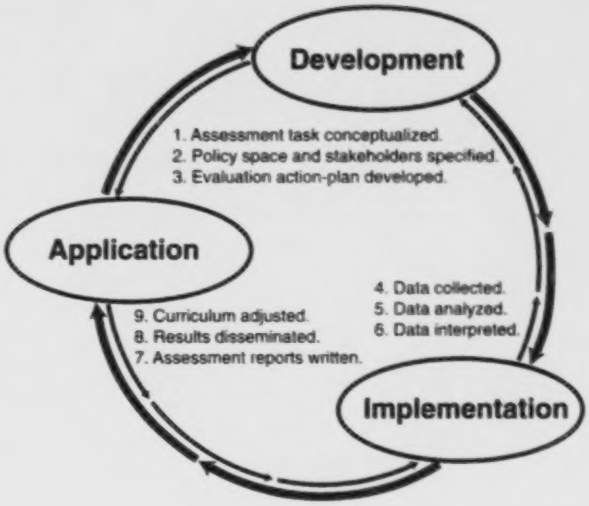
Development
1. Assessment task conceptualized.
2. Policy space and stakeholders specified.
3. Evaluation action-plan developed.
Application
4. Data collected.
5. Data analyzed.
6. Data interpreted.
9. Curriculum adjusted.
8. Results disseminated.
7. Assessment reports written.
Implementation

Figure 1
Program assessment activity model

☐ **Institutional constraints**

In the illustration, an undergraduate "Department of Social Science" in a small, rural Midwestern college implements its assessment action-plan. Procedurally, it twice tests each student enrolled in his/her major program—early in the class-sequence and then again during the final semester of the senior year. The faculty felt that this testing-design—the arrangement of assessment events and participants—enjoyed obvious justification. That is, compare students before and after program instruction (i.e., the "treatment"), and attribute changes in professional attitudes and knowledge to curriculum qualities.

The department decided to measure two areas of student-performance, professional attitudes and cognitive knowledge. Both were important curriculum emphases and, therefore, needed more than one indicator. To assess changing attitudes, the department developed its own paper-and-pencil 10-item attitude survey sampling student opinions about professional behaviors, especially ethics. Measures of cognitive knowledge were obtained from an ETS *Major Field Test*, a standardized instrument. The same versions of both tests were administered near program-entry and program-exit to students who "volunteered" to be tested.

☐ **Results**

Assessment-teams will be provided brief descriptions of the department's major program, its students, instructional objectives, and assessment results. Formatted as the department's annual assessment report, data will be summarized in text, tables, and several figures. To begin, words describe major trends and comparisons, note statistical differences, and specify instructional modifications, supposedly justified by the results. Next, tables summarize numerically data from both the standardized and non-standardized instruments. Finally, several figures emphasize graphically major findings.

Once again, the assessment-teams will study and discuss the department's findings and curricular decisions. They will decide whether...

1. the department's testing-design is appropriate, and
2. the department's interpretations—and curriculum-decisions—are justified.

Discussion

Coupled with assessment-team comments, audience-discussion will emphasize the relationship of ineffective testing-designs and results that are difficult to interpret. In fact, discussion will highlight common threats to clear data-interpretations.

It may be simpler to collect and even analyze data than it is to render meaningful data-interpretations. Whether program assessment data really justifies curriculum reform can be a complex puzzle. Furthermore, as discussion will suggest, data can be misinterpreted.

Reference

Cook, T. D., and D.T. Campbell. *Quasi-experimentation: Design and Analysis Issues in Field Setting.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979.

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A Program Assessment System that Really Works in Improving the Institution

Sheldon H. Cohen

Introduction

Six years ago Washburn University decided to develop an integrated system of program assessment, institutional priorities, budget development, and long-range planning. We were intelligent enough to realize that this was a massive undertaking and best done as a series of smaller overlapping projects. We were, unfortunately, naive or as some might say just dumb in not foreseeing the practical difficulties of getting the whole "Grand Scheme" to actually work at an organization as complex as a university. One of the components of that system, the program review, has been operating for five years and has been extremely successful as a catalyst for causing improvement at Washburn. It is this program that will be discussed in this paper. Our experience with the integrated system is an interesting case history, which offers a great deal of information to others on what works and what doesn't, but since we are still trying to correct observed problems that report will have to be postponed to a later date.

Some Rules for a Successful Program Review System

There are as many different program review systems as there are institutions of higher education. From our experience and observations of successful programs at other universities, there appear to be some basic rules that enhance the probability that the program will lead to institutional improvement. These rules are as follows:

- **Your system must be unique.** Each program review system must be based on your institutional history, its mission and goals, the type of students being served, and many other special characteristics of your university.

- **You can learn from others, but you can't adopt someone else's system.** If you wish to develop a new program review system, see what others have done. Learn from what has been successful or what has failed for others. But do not think you will be saving time, money, effort, and trouble by adopting *in toto* someone else's program.

- **Get everyone involved.** Work on developing good communication very early in the process and keep those lines of communication operating throughout the process. It is better to take the extra time needed to give everyone the opportunity to participate in developing the review program than to have a lot of people believing they are forced to participate in someone else's "damn nonsense."

- **Be positive.** There is nothing more effective in destroying a program review system than to start out with the idea that the major purpose is to determine which programs will be phased out. It is paramount for success to show, in both words and action, that program improvement is the driving force behind program review.

- **Nothing will be perfect.** Don't wait until you think everything is perfectly conceived before starting. If you do, you will never start! When the concept appears "reasonable" try it out. You can always modify the process later.

◇ **Change and improve as you learn from experience.** Always assess the review process and get feedback from all the participants. Use that information to continually improve the process. Remember, the most valuable data for improvement usually deals with things that are weaknesses in programs.

Washburn University's Program Review System

A formal program review system has been operating at Washburn University for the last five years. Changes have been made in the process every year, so the description listed below is that of the most recent program review procedure. In the next section of this paper, some of the modifications and reasons for the alterations will be discussed. All sub-units of the university, both academic and non-academic, undergo program review on a five-year cycle. The most important aspect of the process and the basis of the review is the self-study prepared by each sub-unit. The Planning Office furnishes each area with a good deal of standard data (all of which have been previously shared with the area, but this single tabulation makes sure everything is in one place). For academic units, this includes such items as five-year values of budget data, staffing, student credit hour production, distribution of students' enrollment by upper, lower division, service, and general education courses, number of majors, number of graduates, and cost per student credit hour. For non-academic programs the information is customized for each area. All self-studies contain the following sections:

◇ A brief statement summarizing the unit's mission and a comparison of that mission with the University's statement.

◇ A list of realistic goals and measurable objectives for the unit.

◇ An examination of the programs and/or procedures of the unit.

◇ A discussion of the evaluation system being used to determine if the unit's goals and objectives are being met.

◇ Strengths and weaknesses of the unit. Suggestions for improvement.

To help the units obtain the maximum benefit from the self-study the Planning Office has prepare a book, "A Guide for Program Self-Study at Washburn University," which is given to each member of the unit working on a self-study. This manual includes factors that make for a successful assessment, factors that can impede the assessment, the Washburn University's mission statement, environmental scan data, how to prepare a self-study, and information on different types of outcome assessments.

The self-study is sent by the sub-unit to its school or area director who reviews it and prepares his or her comments for the sub-unit. The sub-unit can revise at this time their study if they wish. The final form of the self-study is forwarded by the school or area director with his or her comments to the University Review Committee (URC). The URC is co-chaired by the University's two vice-presidents and consists of nine elected faculty members, three students, and three other University employees (one chosen by the library staff, one from Student Affairs, and one from the business area). The URC, members of the sub-unit, and the area director meet in a collegial fashion to discuss the self-study. The URC prepares a report that includes strengths and weaknesses of the sub-unit, suggestions for improvement, an overall program rating, and some future budgetary recommendations. The report is sent to the area director, who shares the comments with the sub-unit members. Either the sub-unit or the area director may submit additional material at this time. All the materials on the sub-unit's assessment are submitted to the President. The President's comments are returned to the appropriate vice-president, who shares them with the sub-unit members. In the Fall of each year, the strengths and weaknesses of the sub-unit, the URC ratings and recommendations, and the President's comments are presented to the Board of Regents. At the same meeting, the Director of Planning reports on the improvements that have taken place during the year in sub-units that have been reviewed in previous years.

Some Modification and Points Learned from Experience with Reviews

During the five years of our program review system's operation, we have made our share of mistakes. A few of these are given below with the hope that others can learn from our errors and save themselves a good deal of grief. Also included in this list are some suggestion that proved helpful in making our program more successful.

◇ **Start the reviews with strong programs.** When we were looking for a practice run to test the new program review system, intercollegiate athletics was just sitting around begging a review. Therefore, that program was the first that went through the procedure. Unfortunately, even under the best circumstances, that is a very complicated area with all types of hidden agendas. The initial review almost killed the new system before it got started. We did learn our lesson. The first year of full operation we carefully chose units with strong leadership and outstanding history of success to be examined. It is important to have some success at the beginning of a new effort, and this also allows us to have some good models of self-studies available for use by programs with upcoming reviews.

◇ **Differentiate between student and program outcomes.** In the first two years of our program, academic units tended to discuss outcomes in terms of only their program outcomes. What was expected of their students was usually omitted from the self-study. The difference between the two was discussed in the revised edition of the Program Review Guide, and the directions for the outcome section of the self-study were changed to encourage departments to look also at students performance.

◇ **Carefully consider what is sent to the Board of Regents.** The first year of our program, we sent nearly everything to the BOR. They felt overwhelmed by the mass of material and at the same time believed they didn't have a good picture of each unit. Now a great deal of material is summarized, like strengths and weaknesses and suggested improvements. A standard sheet of background data is also furnished to them for each reviewed unit. Both the data sheets and the summaries are first reviewed by each unit before they are sent to the Board to make sure there are no errors or misinterpretations of information.

◇ **Flexibility in the self-study form is important.** Many areas need self-studies for external accreditation. Often these reports must be in a relatively rigid form. The URC allowed the sub-units to prepare only one self-study under these circumstances and add material to make sure they have covered all the areas of interest in the university's review. Everyone has enough to do without more busy work. The URC was willing to do the extra work of finding key points instead of having the units do additional work of writing a second report.

◇ **Proper scheduling often can save efforts for reviewed units.** Scheduling the review for certain units the same year can often reduce the amount of work needed in preparing for the review. For example, the examining of many non-academic units at the same time in the five-year cycle allowed them to combine their efforts in such items as "customer" satisfactory surveys.

◇ **Once a five-year schedule for reviews has been prepared, remember it is not in stone.** Even though a master calendar was prepared at the beginning of the five-year cycle, because of special circumstances like the hiring of a new department chairperson or a major change in curriculum, self-studies were postponed until the areas could better benefit from the reviews.

◇ **Allow plenty of time for the URC's work.** The work of the URC can be very hectic. They have a great deal of reading to do before they ever meet with the members of the sub-units. Make sure they have enough time to be well prepared.

◇ **Be generous in your thanks to all participants.** Any success of the program reviews will be due to the hard work of the members of the sub-units on their self-study and the efforts of the URC members. Thanking them for their contribution to the process is always appreciated.

Improvements "Caused" by Program Review

The best measurement of the success of a program review system is the quality and the quantity of the improvements generated by that assessment process. It, of course, would be unfair to imply that all improvements in the reviewed units were due to the review process. But it is very clear that this program has accelerated the rate of and the quality of the changes. Each year the Planning Office interviews the leaders of all the units that have undergone program review in the five-year cycle to determine what improvements have taken place in the last year. Special emphasis is given to suggestions made in the unit's self-study of possible improvements and to what has been done to strengthen areas that were listed as weaknesses in the unit by the URC. This material is tabulated and circulated to all faculty and staff and then presented to the BOR along with the material from that year's program reviews. These multi-page reports are impressive documents that give students, faculty, staff, administrators, governing board member, and the general public a better idea of what exciting changes are taking place on campus.

Most of the improvements are small and are attempts to correct a specific unit weakness. There are, for example, items like updating the department's alumni files, improving ventilation in a laboratory area, adding a capstone course, or starting a departmental student club. Some of the improvements have, on the other hand, caused major changes on campus. A few examples of these would be the formulation of a new all-university writing requirement, changes in the university's technical credit policy, the construction of new technology classrooms, the total reworking of an area's curriculum, enhancing student tutorial services, and restructuring the university's financial aid service. Although it was not the intent of the program review to remove degrees, it turned out that in the first four years of the review three programs were voluntarily terminated by sub-units after they did their self-studies. But there is little question that the greatest benefit of the Washburn Program Review is that it has caused a great many of the faculty and staff to think about what they do, why they do it, and how they can do it better.

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Major Program Assessment at Ohio Dominican College: Nuts and Bolts

Joanne Vickers

Institutional Context and Background

Ohio Dominican College (ODC) is a private, four-year liberal arts college (BA II) located in Columbus. Its Mission Statement, reaffirmed by the faculty and board of trustees in 1986, supplies the source of the College's considerable energy "to contemplate truth and to share with others the fruits of this contemplation." Since the College was founded in 1911, this energy has been used to provide educational programs for students who have often been denied access to higher education, such as first-generation college students, minority students, and adults returning to school. Faculty and administrators continually draw on this energy to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to live and work in the 21st century. In this context, assessment is a given, ongoing process, and faculty are committed to it.

The Assessment Plan: Concept and Practice

The North Central Association approved Ohio Dominican's Assessment Plan in July 1995. The Plan carefully articulates a conceptual framework for assessment: It states that the bridge between the College's Mission and the assessment of student academic achievement and institutional effectiveness is the search for truth, which is explained as holistic, dynamic, diverse, and grounded in faith. The Plan further notes that the college-wide expression of truth is grounded in a rich general distribution program and Humanities Program, upon which the 37 disciplinary majors build. The Plan also describes a four-year history of various assessment activities at the College, such as the formulation of goals and knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSA's) for all majors by the faculty teaching in those majors, and the Assessment Committee's development of an assessment vocabulary that ensures that all faculty are speaking the same language. Finally, the Plan outlines a campus-wide coordinated and practical assessment program for the general distribution requirement, the Humanities, and the disciplinary majors.

The Major Assessment Program

Building a program from a plan, as you are acutely aware if you have begun your own institutional self-study, is about as easy as pulling an impacted tooth from a cranky rhinoceros. From the perspective of the Academic Affairs administrators and a core group of faculty serving on various pertinent committees, the academic assessment program had to be coherent, logical, and feasible; it also had to incorporate earlier assessment work done by faculty in various disciplines. As NCA has cautioned, you can't do everything, and you need to keep it simple.

The process we agreed upon follows these basic steps:

- ◇ The goals and KSAs of each major are correlated to the faculty-approved competencies of the College, which themselves are drawn from the Mission Statement. These competencies include reasoning, communication, interpersonal relationships, resource management, and reflectivity.
- ◇ The goals and KSAs for every course in a particular major are correlated with the goals and KSAs of that major. (The major program is defined as all of the courses listed in the College Catalog as required for fulfilling the major.)

- ◇ Within a major, the faculty identify the five most commonly-used indicators for measuring student performance, the standards or components of measure for each indicator, and the specific major goals and KSAs each indicator evaluates.

  Major faculty divide among themselves the tasks of collecting samples of the five common indicators from students in various major courses; individually, they grade the indicators on the basis of the given standards for each indicator and write a brief report on their findings.

- ◇ Collectively, major faculty share the information they discover from the sample of student indicators to see which patterns of evidence on student performance and ability emerge. Some major programs also share this information, as well as syllabi and descriptions of the major found in various campus publications, with external reviewers (both professional practitioners and academic colleagues from other institutions) for input about the program itself, as well as the performance of students in the major.

- ◇ Collectively and individually, major faculty respond to their discoveries in a variety of ways and develop appropriate feedback for their students, the administration, and, perhaps most importantly, for themselves. Appropriate confirmation and change follow the feedback.

The College's commitment to this process goes beyond the NCA team visit in September 1997. We plan to continue a coordinated, structured major assessment on a three-year rotating schedule, beginning in 1998.

Major Assessment Documents and Forms

So far, coherent and logical. Now for feasible. To make the process as easy as possible for a faculty already overwhelmed with teaching, advising, service, and research responsibilities, the Assessment Committee adopted an approach that keeps both the forest and the trees in perspective.

At the outset of the process, the Assessment Committee sent faculty an outline for the final reports expected of all majors and followed up with a faculty meeting to discuss the reports. The outline breaks the report contents into six parts:

- ◇ major programs and institutional mission;
- ◇ major goals and objectives and college competencies;
- ◇ patterns of evidence: indicators, criteria, and standards assessment;
- ◇ major programs;
- ◇ analysis of indicators;
- ◇ patterns of evidence: feedback, and
- ◇ patterns of evidence: validation/improvement of student learning.

Each part explains the narrative expected, suggests resources for gathering the relevant information, suggests an appropriate length for the narrative, and provides a deadline by which the narrative is due to the Assessment Committee.

The Committee divided the assessment process into the basic steps described above, and, in various campus meetings, continued to report to faculty on the status of the program—the work that had been done, the work remaining, and any changes required to accomplish the work. The communication lines at all levels remain open and alive.

To complete the critical steps of the assessment process, we also developed a series of forms to facilitate the collection of necessary information and the writing of the final major report. At first glance, these forms were intimidating to some faculty; after all, they represent a lot of paper (and a lot of disk space for those who worked electronically). However, as faculty began to work through the forms, sometimes with the help of Assessment Committee members, they began to see how simple and useful they are.

Four forms provide the framework for establishing essential information about the major:

- **"Major KSAs/College Competencies"** is a grid that correlates these relationships.
- **"Major KSAs/Major Courses"** is a grid that shows which individual courses required of a major develop the various KSAs identified by the major program.
- **"Survey of Academic Achievement Indicators and Major Program Objectives at ODC"** is a grid that identifies which indicators are used to measure student achievement of the knowledge, skills, and attitude objectives. The list of indicators was developed by the Assessment Committee and includes nine categories: tests, essay/writings, oral presentations, projects, performance observations, group work, written homework, comprehensive reviews, and external reviews.
- **"Competencies, Criteria, Indicators, Standards"** follows the above form; it asks faculty to identify their five common indicators and the standards/components of measure used to determine student grades.

The Assessment Committee provided models of additional forms that could be used to complement these basic four. For example, it was suggested that individual faculty could design a grid to identify the standards of an indicator and the grading scale used to weigh the standards. A sample narrative report for individual courses was also developed; it summarizes the instructor's analysis of indicators and provides appropriate feedback. These reports are used at meetings of major faculty to discuss patterns of evidence that evolve and suggested proposals for improvement.

While major programs and individual faculty have, as a matter of course, pursued various assessment projects in the past, we have been working with this structured, coordinated assessment process for just this past year. It is too soon to draw conclusions about its overall effectiveness. However, faculty already have discovered some valuable information about their teaching and grading methodologies and their major students' abilities.

For example, we now know that more than 90 percent of our courses require oral preparation of students. Since we have been considering adding a speech course to our general education requirements, this information is important; in the interim, some faculty are working on a proposed common set of expectations for oral presentations. Another frequent observation by faculty, as they gather information, is that their syllabi are not as specific about grading methodologies as they thought; many syllabi have been rewritten to clarify how essays and tests, for example, will be graded. Likewise, patterns of evidence concerning student vocabulary limitations—general as well as discipline-specific—seem to be emerging as are student difficulties in developing arguments on essays.

As we continue this process, as we work with the forms and the narratives and share them with colleagues in the major and throughout the College, we will develop a clear, specific, and substantiated picture of the current health of ODC's major programs and their students, which will both reaffirm our successes and provide direction for future improvements.

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Portfolio Assessment at an Engineering School: Lessons Learned over a Decade

Barbara M. Olds
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Overview

For nearly a decade, the Colorado School of Mines (CSM) has been using portfolios to assess the education that our engineering and applied science students receive—both in the core and in their majors. In this paper we will describe briefly the history of our assessment program, outline our current process, discuss why we chose to use portfolios, give examples of curricular changes resulting from our assessments, discuss some of the strengths and weaknesses of portfolio assessment, and look to the future of assessment efforts at CSM.

A Brief History of Assessment at CSM

In the late 1980s, Colorado, like many other states, became interested in higher education accountability and assessment and passed legislation requiring the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) to "develop an accountability policy and report annually on its implementation." In addition, the legislation required that institutions of higher learning be held accountable for improvements in student knowledge between entrance and graduation; that these improvements be publicly announced and available; that institutions express clearly, to students, their expectations of student performance; and that these improvements be achieved through effective use of time, effort, and money. The state required each institution to report assessment of general education, discipline-specific education, retention and completion, alumni/student satisfaction, after-graduation performance, minority student statistics, and costs. According to the timeline established by CCHE, each institution was required to submit, for approval in 1988, its institutional goals and objectives, and to submit an assessment plan, after the goals were approved. In 1989, the first assessment reports were submitted. The legislation stipulated that CCHE could retain two percent of an institution's appropriation if it found the assessment report "unsatisfactory."

Colorado allowed each institution to develop an individual assessment plan appropriate for its size, student body, mission, and goals. After considerable input from alumni, recruiters, faculty, and students, CSM chose to develop the portfolio assessment program, which we have been using since 1989. The School has had both North Central and ABET (Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology) accreditation visits since then; it has received positive feedback about the assessment program from both agencies. Although Colorado is changing its accountability focus to performance standards, CSM intends to continue its portfolio assessment program, with appropriate modifications, because we believe it provides us with valuable information about teaching and learning at our institution and because we believe it addresses the need for a strong assessment program required by both North Central and ABET.

The Portfolio Assessment Process

As a major part of its CCHE-approved assessment plan, CSM proposed using a portfolio system based on maintaining comprehensive longitudinal records for a statistically-based sample of CSM students (Olds and Pavelich 1996). The plan was developed with input from students, faculty, administrators, alumni, and employers. In brief, each year we select a random sample of incoming students (approximately 10 percent of the freshman class) for whom we develop portfolios. For these students, we collect typical quantitative data such as SAT and ACT scores and GPAs; we include in the portfolios samples of classroom work from a variety of courses, surveys, and other feedback about the students' satisfaction with the institution. Each spring, a faculty Assessment Committee evaluates the portfolios; the Committee's summary provides the heart of our annual report to the campus and CCHE.

At the beginning of each semester, the registrar provides the Assessment Coordinator with class lists for all portfolio students. Based on these lists, professors and department heads are contacted twice during the semester and reminded to collect pertinent materials. The materials collected for freshman and sophomore students are forwarded to the Assessment Committee and are filed in each student's portfolio for evaluation later in the year. Each major department retains the materials for its juniors and seniors to be evaluated at the department level.

We made a conscious decision, in this process, to place as little burden as possible on the individual student, since our goal was institutional and programmatic assessment, not assessment of individual progress. In our plan, students involved in the assessment process are only vaguely aware that their course work is being collected and evaluated, although they and/or their parents sign a consent form when they are selected for the program. However, we believe that strong arguments can be made for involving students more actively in the assessment process, by having them collect, or perhaps even select, the material for the portfolios, and particularly by having them write periodic self-reflection/assessment papers for inclusion in the portfolio. There is some sentiment for moving in this direction as we revise our assessment plan. If students are convinced of their worth, such portfolios provide opportunities for student learning, especially if they are reviewed frequently with an advisor; they can provide powerful evidence to potential employers of what a student knows and is able to do.

The Assessment Committee, with approximately ten members from disciplines across campus, meets regularly during the academic year to discuss assessment issues and for two days after the end of the school year to evaluate freshman and sophomore portfolios. The current committee includes representatives from engineering, mathematics, chemistry, physics, geology, and liberal arts. Their evaluations and recommendations (always in the aggregate), along with those from each department that assesses its majors, form the basis of the Annual Report to the CSM campus and to CCHE (Olds 1995).

Use of Portfolios in a Technical Department

As the CSM school-wide assessment plan began to take shape, each department, including chemical engineering, began faculty discussions to determine ways to assess student performance within the major. Chemical engineering decided to extend the portfolio system to its upper-division majors, by collecting and scoring course materials from chemical engineering lecture, laboratory, and design courses. At the end of each semester, designated materials for each assessment student are collected from course instructors and assessed by the chemical engineering Assessment Committee, which consists of three department faculty members.

After assessing student materials for each semester, the department's Assessment Committee analyzes the results and presents its conclusions in a report to the department and to the CSM Assessment Committee. Topics discussed include overall student strengths, areas in need of improvement, student abilities that are difficult to measure using portfolios, anticipated changes in the CR curriculum based on student performance, and anticipated changes in the assessment process.

Why Portfolios?

After nearly a decade of portfolio assessment, we have concluded that this method has some definite advantages. First, many educators agree that there has been serious dissatisfaction with overdependency on standardized testing. Though we see legitimate uses for standardized tests, such as the Graduate Record Examination or the

Fundamentals of Engineering exam, we also see the potential for problems of the type articulated by Courts and McInerney (1993, 2):

> All too often, it seems to us, those who create the tests are far (entirely?) removed from the specific programs, curricula, and students to be tested. This lack of connection results in "generic" tests—tests that simply (or complexly) engage in assessing something, but what exactly the nature of that "something" is often remains clouded in jargon: that is, while the tests may "clearly" state that they are assessing a given program, ability, or skill, the specific elements within the program to be assessed are often fuzzily articulated; or, while a given skill (reading, writing) may be identified, the complex nature of the skill is often poorly delineated and unrelated to the genuine nature of the ability or skill to be tested.

In addition, it has been argued (Forrest 1990) that evaluation activities should draw upon and support teaching activities, not intrude into or even detract from them. We believe that portfolios address this concern. We collect material that is already being used in the teaching/learning process and that already has meaning to both students and faculty. Many of these materials can be used in a variety of ways. For example, a single paper from a freshman humanities and social sciences class may tell us something about a student's writing ability, critical thinking skills, and ethical stance.

Second, there is evidence that tracking students over time gives the best information about how to improve student learning. For example, the Joint Task Force on Engineering Education Assessment (1996, 20) argues, "As program improvement is the objective of assessment, schools are cautioned to assure that assessment results are measuring the consequences of a program characteristic that has operated for a sufficiently long period of time to provide a causal relationship to the outcomes being measured." Since the goal of our process is to provide our colleagues with both formative and summative information about the teaching/learning process, portfolios provide a particularly rich means of accomplishing this goal. We discuss below some of the changes that have taken place in our curriculum as a result of the assessment process. In addition, we have been able to use data from our sample to study such issues as graduation rates, number and sequence of humanities and social sciences courses taken, and comparisons between the published "normal" core sequence for students and the sequence they actually take. Our ability to evaluate the success of our programs will, we believe, increase as we are able to follow the careers of the assessment students who have graduated.

Finally, most assessment experts agree that no single instrument is adequate and that institutions need to use several assessment techniques simultaneously or to "triangulate." The Joint Task Force (1996, 22) says, "Clearly, no one assessment device will suffice for all the educational objectives that we expect the modern engineering graduate to obtain from today's university education." We believe that portfolios allow us to collect a variety of materials in a non-intrusive way. We agree with Forrest that there are additional advantages to portfolio assessment: it builds on existing assessment activities and is not radical; it can be implemented piece-by-piece (even in a single course); it can be adapted to the local culture and to the local motivations for assessment; it can be cost effective; and it can be explored, initially, by involving only a small number of students, faculty, and administrators.

Changes Linked to the Assessment Process

Since the assessment program was begun to meet a legislative mandate, CSM focused for the first several years on satisfying legislative audiences. We were able to document gratifying progress in student learning in most categories, and our portfolio approach was praised by the CCHE. However, we have since begun to focus more on using our assessment data to provide feedback to departments and individual faculty so that they can fine-tune their programs and courses. For example, one department collected its students' writing samples in the junior and senior years and noticed that faculty were requiring only perfunctory writing. The professors involved changed their requirements to provide more in-depth writing opportunities for students, with the result that their students have become more proficient writers. Another department noticed that introductory course exams did not include any questions that might evaluate students' higher level technical thinking; questions required only direct recall. The faculty in that department have made a concerted effort to include more multi-step, "synthesis" questions into course content and on exams.

There have also been some institutional changes as a result of assessment. The faculty evaluating freshman and sophomore writing have noticed spottiness in the quality of recent student work and inconsistency in faculty grading standards. We attribute these problems to the loss of leadership in the writing program and have committed the School to hire one or two communications experts to redesign and oversee our writing-across-the-curriculum efforts.

Another example of change relates to data we have collected on students' intellectual growth, using the model developed by William Perry (Pavelich and Moore 1993; Pavelich, Olds, and Miller 1995). These data indicate that CSM students show somewhat greater improvement in higher-level thinking ability than is usually found in undergraduate students. We attribute much of this to their extensive experience with real-world design problems from their freshman year on. We would like to see even more students reach higher levels. A group of faculty working with freshman design has taken on the task of analyzing how we can improve mentoring of students in design courses to facilitate their intellectual development.

Strengths and Weaknesses

There are several strengths to the portfolio method: it does not intrude on normal classroom procedures; it allows us to view multiple examples of a student's work over time; it is deeply analytical; feedback can be used for both formative and summative changes. In addition, we have seen a heightened awareness of assessment and the need for continuous improvement on the campus, real change in courses and programs, faculty involvement in the process through our bottom-up approach, and a data-based decision-making process.

The only major weakness we have seen lies in our underuse of the rich data we have collected. Specifically, we have not yet devised a way to make full use of the data as a continuous improvement feedback mechanism for our courses and programs. Part of the reason is historical; since the assessment program grew out of a political mandate, most of our early effort was focused on meeting the needs of outside constituents. This led to lack of buy-in from several departments and lack of knowledge about the assessment processes among some campus groups. We are addressing this situation in our current process and have focused recent efforts much more on the campus community and how assessment can benefit both faculty and students.

The Next Step

We see a wonderful opportunity to strengthen our use of assessment as direct feedback, as an integral and natural part of our course and program design. CSM is in the midst of an undergraduate curriculum redesign effort. As a faculty we have rethought and rearticulated our goals and developed a curricular framework that contains some exciting innovations; large numbers of faculty from all departments are working energetically to redesign specific pieces of the curriculum. As part of the redesign process each of these working groups has been asked to supply an assessment component in its course or program plan. We hope to see assessment embedded as an integral part of our new curriculum by faculty who design assessment measures to meet their specific needs. The Assessment Committee is focusing its efforts on advising faculty groups as they develop appropriate assessment strategies. We recently spent three days discussing the new ABET criteria and where the various attributes could be developed in our proposed curricula; then we brainstormed about various assessment techniques that might measure each. These and other options will be discussed with the various programs on campus as we work with faculty to design authentic assessments of student learning. We believe that our experience over the past decade has provided insights and experiences that will make the new CSM assessment process even more effective.

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A Model for Non-Instructional Program Review

E. Beth Schwarzmueller
Barbara Dearing

Why Measure Effectiveness in Academic Support and Administrative Departments?

Over the past ten years much has been written about program evaluation in higher education. This attention has been stimulated by a desire to collect systematic information about program quality, to make wise decisions about resource allocation and reallocation, and to meet requirements and expectations of external constituencies. In almost all instances, however, these evaluations have focused on academic programs; very few institutions have given more than passing attention to academic support and administrative units. At one level this attention is understandable; the mission of the college is not to "do administration" but to provide instruction, research, and/or service. It therefore follows that initial interest in program evaluation would focus on the activities emanating from the college's mission. At the same time, administrative units have not been evaluated because most units require a unique evaluation plan. Each evaluation requires considerable time to identify appropriate performance measures and establish collection procedures for the unit being evaluated. "There is greater functional similarity across academic units than across administrative units. The functional uniqueness of each administrative unit has been a significant impediment to evaluating these units" (Wilson, 1987). While performance indicators defined by professional organizations such as the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) and the Association of Governing Boards (AGB) provide normative data that allow comparisons among institutions on a few measures common to most institutions, many academic support and administrative departments find reason to challenge the applicability of these data in measuring the effectiveness of their specific department.

Franklin University's Program to Address Institutional Effectiveness

Franklin University initiated its *Instructional Program Review* in 1989. All major programs participate in a program review, which includes a self-study and external evaluation, once every five years. The self-study looks at the history of the program (faculty, curriculum, resources, evaluation, and methodology); goals and objectives of the program and how these articulate the university's mission; curriculum of the program (design, evolution, coordination, professional standards, and the integration of the general education component within the program); faculty (full-time and adjunct); equipment and facilities; the program's relationship to its external environment; enrollment, recruitment, and retention of students in the program; articulation with two-year programs; and a program evaluation (alumni and employer surveys).

The university used the 1989 NCA mandate to create an assessment program that documents student academic achievement as an opportunity to create a process that would complement the program review process. While the *Assessment Program* documents student's academic achievement in each of the academic programs, the *Instructional Program Review* analyzes the value of the program to the community, the resources required for the program, enrollment and retention in the program, and potential for the future. The results of the *Assessment Program* and the *Instructional Program Review* are reported through faculty governance to the President and the Board of Trustees.

While the university's *Assessment Program* was still being reviewed by North Central Association, the University began its periodic strategic planning process. The Board of Trustees, with the faculty and administration, now more in tune with the issues associated with assessment and documenting academic achievement, changed their mission statement to include a new descriptor, "measurably-effective," for its programs. At the same time seven directions were selected to lead the university for the next seven years. One of the seven directions was *Measuring Effectiveness*, which says, "To ensure ongoing effectiveness of academic and academic-support programs, Franklin University will continue its Instructional Program Review and Assessment Processes, and *develop new methods for reviewing academic and non-academic support areas.*"

Based on this direction, the University conducted its first *Non-Instructional Program Review* during 1995-96. Three areas—the Teaching and Learning Center, Career and Student Development, and the Purchasing Department—completed program reviews during this pilot year.

The *Non-Instructional Program Review* process joins Franklin University's *Assessment Program* and *Instructional Program Review* to form a three-pronged proactive approach to ensuring Institutional Effectiveness. The process has now been applied to eight departments, including the Teaching and Learning Center, Career and Student Development, Financial Aid, Cash Management of Financial Aid, Purchasing, Instructional Technology, Administrative Operations for the University's graduate program, and Annual Giving.

Franklin University's Model for Non-Instructional Program Review

The model is designed to help each department, over a six-month period, evaluate its performance in terms of productivity, efficiency, effectiveness, quality, and innovation. Each *Non-Instructional Program Review* report includes an evaluation of the goals and objectives of the department to ensure they are in line with the university's mission. Based on data collected, the report also includes a listing of strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations for department improvement.

The design of the *Non-Instructional Program Review* process includes:

- a review of the history of the department and its purposes;
- an analysis of the goals and objectives as currently stated, and an analysis to acknowledge any weaknesses in these goals and objectives (measurable results must be included in the department's objectives);
- a review of the activities and functions of the department to include an evaluation of the extent to which they meet standards as measured by exemplary departments elsewhere, standards set by professional bodies for similar departments, and/or standards set by the university;
- a review of staff resources, how they have increased or decreased in number over time, and an analysis of the individuals' professional development including involvement in professional associations;
- an analysis of the adequacy of hardware, software, equipment, and facilities support;
- an analysis of the department's commitment and support for relationship management principles internal and external to the university;
- an examination of the department's relationship with the internal environment that allows the department to identify its relationship to students and other departments at the university and to determine ways these entities can collaborate in carrying out the mission of the University and the objectives of the department itself;
- an examination of the relationship with the external environment that allows the department to evaluate its relationship with vendors and other service providers outside the University.

The final report summarizes the analyses and presents global strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations, including changes to the financial support for the department, if any, that will form the basis for budgeting (including capital expenditures) over the next five years.

Benefits to the University

Organizational performance measures are the necessary link connecting vision to management strategies that actualize performance improvement. Organizational performance measures enable leaders to monitor improvement, to maintain control of key work processes, to be more accountable to important stakeholders, and to guide decisions leading to change in strategic direction (Lembcke & Swope, 1995). Franklin University now has processes in place to ascertain the extent to which it is achieving its purposes. Taken together these processes comprise a system for assessing institutional effectiveness. The installation of such an assessment system provides information the university can use to improve the effectiveness of its services to its students and communities. Further, installing such a system enables the university to provide documented evidence of quality, expressed in terms of results achieved, to external publics including the business community, state education agencies, and accrediting bodies.

Practical Advice for Those Considering a Non-Instructional Program Review

Healthy organizations, like healthy individuals, should engage in a constant process of self-reflection, ensuring that their purposes, values, and behaviors are adaptive and not dysfunctional in the dynamic environment in which they operate (Yudof, 1996). In practice those institutions that seek to make a commitment to be healthy must make a serious investment of time to this process. But the potential payoff is organizational rejuvenation: the complete redesign or elimination of inefficient and overly complex processes (Yudof, 1996). The quality improvement process afforded in the *Non-Instructional Program Review* is a major activity for each department and there are no short cuts or quick fixes when it comes to the amount of time necessary to complete this process.

The quality improvement process also requires that the department identify and listen to its customers. The identification process must include both external and internal customers of the department, the latter which may be difficult if the department interacts with a large number of other university departments. Successful identification should then be followed by surveys to each customer segment to determine their "satisfaction" with the department and areas identified for improvement. Such action can lead not only to increased efficiency in meeting the customers' expectations, but also in exceeding customers' expectations in addition to better relationship management with the customer.

Total Quality Management is predicated upon the assumption that significant gains in quality and customer service can be achieved within existing resources. This will necessitate the department learning to "think out of the box" as it identifies ways in which to increase its efficiency, productivity, and customer service. If adequate resources are devoted to employee training and empowerment, new perspectives are achieved for the department in exceeding its customer expectations.

A final word of advice for those desiring to complete a *Non-Instructional Program Review* is that it requires active involvement of all employees. The process of initiating and implementing new policy begins at the bottom and ends at the top. In other words, the individuals within the department who do the work must have a commitment to change and quality improvement, perceiving that they contribute to the formulation of the change and vested interest in its success (Yudof, 1996).

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Portfolios and Program Assessment: Addressing the Challenges of Moving Targets

Bette S. Bergeron
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> "[A portfolio is] reflective of where you've been, where you are, and where you want to be. It's a picture of you."
>
> "[Portfolios are] a virtually useless, make-work assignment that serve no practical purpose"—Purdue University Calumet Teacher Education Students

The conflicting statements illustrated in these student comments reflect the potential benefits and challenges that arise when student portfolios are part of departmental requirements. These conflicts can be magnified when the requirement is coupled with issues of program assessment. While a department may recognize intuitively the potential of portfolios in measuring student performance, can this tool be placed successfully within program assessment initiatives while effectively addressing the inevitable challenges that occur when attempting to measure institutional "moving targets"?

Portfolios have the potential to provide academic programs with the opportunity to view student learning and outcomes in unique ways. Because portfolios authentically represent real performance and, therefore, reflect what is taught institutionally, they are invaluable tools for program evaluation (Sparapani, Abel, Easton, Edwards, and Herbster, 1996). Portfolios provide students with opportunities to reflect on their own growth over time; they allow faculty to view student work within the context of actual teaching experiences (Barton and Collins, 1993). Winsor and Ellefson (1995) report that portfolios can be pursued as a framework for meaningful, shared, and authentic evaluation of programs. The issue of portfolios' use within program evaluation provides an important avenue for discussion as potential promises and challenges are revealed. This discussion begins with a brief exploration of Purdue University Calumet's (PUC) teacher education portfolio initiatives.

Program Assessment at Purdue University Calumet

PUC is a commuter campus that enrolls more than 9,200 students each semester. Located in the northwest region of Indiana, PUC has the opportunity to serve both urban and rural students. Support of the diverse needs of learners on this campus is a continual goal and challenge, one that has led in part to a campus-wide emphasis on assessment. Institutional assessment efforts are based on a philosophy that emphasizes an improvement-oriented approach to evaluating programs that directly affect students. Assessment activities at PUC adhere to a student-centered philosophy. Wresch and Schallenkamp (1996) note that a focus on expected student outcomes offers an avenue for curricular change.

Each department or program area at PUC has developed assessment plans that identify goals, expected student outcomes, and procedures for measuring these outcomes. While departments are encouraged to develop local assessment tools, data from various campus-wide surveys of both current students and alumni are disseminated to support departmental assessment activities. Individual program assessment results are reported annually to deans and vice chancellors and emphasize recommendations for program improvement. The institution's assessment process was approved by an NCA focus team in Summer 1996. The success of these assessment efforts results in large part from departmental flexibility in responding to their own specific desired outcomes.

Purdue University Calumet Teacher Education Program Standards

Graduates of PUC's teacher education programs will demonstrate an understanding of and professional competence in:

- Instructional Uses of Technology
- Multi-Cultural Education
- Lesson Preparation and Implementation
- Content/Specialty Area Knowledge
- Community Collaboration
- Children with Special Needs
- Written Communication
- Problem-Solving Skills
- Educational Research

Figure 1

The development of teacher education portfolios within PUC's Department of Education occurred simultaneously with the campus-wide assessment initiatives. An initial department challenge was to develop appropriate outcome statements that best reflected program goals. Three student outcomes formed the basis for the first assessment endeavors: development of appropriate lesson plans, effective oral and written communication skills, and proficiency in demonstrating knowledge of content. As the department began to more closely examine changing program expectations being addressed by outside agencies, including INTASC and the Indiana Professional Standards Board, those intended student outcomes developed into the current nine program standards (see Figure 1). These standards also reflect the department's conceptual framework and the campus general education requirements.

As teacher education program outcomes were developed and refined, an equally difficult challenge remained how to measure annually the progress of more than 750 undergraduate teacher education students while determining whether program outcomes were achieved. Though traditional quantitative forms of assessment including student teaching evaluations and program surveys were already in place, the use of professional portfolios emerged as another means for authentically measuring student outcomes. Implemented in Fall 1994, portfolios are now required of all teacher education undergraduates. The goals of this initiative are to support the growth of quality professionals and to provide alternative means for gathering feedback regarding program evaluation.

Each teacher education student maintains a portfolio that is reviewed at three points during the program. As part of the program admission process, students meet with two education faculty members to discuss initial portfolio development and to identify strengths and needs of both the individual student and the program as a whole. As students enter into their methods coursework, they attend informational meetings where they have the opportunity to review their peers' portfolios. Students have a final portfolio interview with their University Supervisor, at the conclusion of their student teaching experience. Checklists used during each of the three phases mark progress, identify problems with writing mechanics, and check for inclusion of required elements.

Portfolios as Assessment: Finding the Target

As PUC's teacher education portfolio process is implemented, several reoccurring issues have emerged that have prompted the continual refinement of this process. In particular are challenges that relate to entry selection, student reflection, and evaluation. Initially, portfolio entries were prescribed and tied directly to specified course assignments. For example, all students were required to reproduce entries from an early field experience course and include a journal abstract related to special education. They were also required to produce a preestablished number of entries from general education, professional education, professional methods, and student teaching. While portfolio entries were prescribed, however, there was the expectation from the department that portfolios would support students' development as reflective professionals. Not surprisingly, it quickly became evident that prescription and reflection were, in this case, mutually exclusive.

The challenges of prescription and reflection are being addressed through a more open-ended approach to the portfolio process. Currently, teacher education students individually select entries reflective of the nine program standards. These entries can be drawn from any course, field, or individual experience. This allows the portfolio to be more individualized, and provides students with the opportunity to reflect more carefully on their entry choices. Each entry selection is accompanied by a rationale statement that identifies the entry's purpose as it relates to the student's individual growth and program outcomes. In addition, at the beginning and end of their program, students are asked to develop reflection papers that address issues specified by the department.

A critical challenge remains—review and evaluation of individual portfolios given limited resources, particularly faculty time. At least some degree of faculty resistance to assessment endeavors remains a challenge for most institutions. Palomba (1996) found that faculty may confuse program assessment with faculty evaluation and/or simply refuse to participate. Faculty assistance is necessary if assessment activities are to be carried out successfully. PUC is addressing this challenge through campus workshops featuring both in-house and national speakers. As with most other departments, Education has an assessment committee that jointly addresses concerns, revises assessment processes and tools, and develops the annual report. Graduate students assist in screening portfolios; all faculty members are encouraged to participate in student/faculty interviews. While assessment endeavors require additional faculty involvement, sharing the load of responsibilities and integrating faculty in the processes and successes of these endeavors will support the goals of program assessment.

Moving Forward

The use of portfolios within PUC's teacher education programs has provided the department with important data that may have been unavailable using traditional means. For example, portfolios have helped to identify the need for more field experiences, better communication among advisors, training in issues of diversity and classroom management, and more attention to written communication skills. Providing faculty and students with opportunities to talk with each other through the process of portfolio review also strengthens the program because it helps build a sense of mutual collaboration. As revisions are made to allow for more individualized reflection, students recognize the potential of portfolios as measures of their own growth as professionals. They also recognize the necessity of having portfolios as a job interviewing tool—particularly as the regional job market remains highly competitive.

It is also apparent, however, that additional challenges need to be addressed if an accurate picture of teacher education programs is to be achieved. Developing a tool to measure students' outcomes, as reflected by the nine program standards, remains a primary challenge. The current checklist addresses only superficial requirements; a tool that identifies a deeper level of student understanding and professional competence needs to be created. Additionally, there remains a concern that the very process of mandating portfolios is counter to the potential reflectivity that can be the hallmark of this tool. Will requiring students to document program goals within their portfolios overshadow a more personal involvement of the student? Will students perceive portfolios as something done to them rather than by them (Carroll, Potthoff, and Huber, 1996)?

One teacher education student noted that portfolios are "another mechanism used by the school to add requirements, so that [schools] could get more money." It is hoped that careful attention to open-ended entry requirements, opportunities for reflection, and more appropriate means for portfolio evaluation can counter the cynicism embedded in this remark. As the department's involvement with portfolios grows, it is more evident that the greatest challenge of this initiative may be to maintain student ownership of the process. If that can be achieved, portfolios will provide programs with an effective tool for measuring and developing institutional "moving targets."

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Holding Up a Mirror: Classroom Assessment Techniques in a Graduate Early Childhood Teacher Education Program

Shannan McNair

Diane approaches me after class. Her voice trembles and her eyes point downward examining the cracks in the flooring. "I think I am going to like this class. I have been hearing a lot about authentic assessment, but I am not really sure what it means. I'm worried about the assignments; in the group activity we did the younger students were talking about things they were doing in their classrooms that are miles ahead of me. I haven't been a student in 17 years. How can I be as good as those young women? Should I even be here?"

I'm reading a set of paper on multiculturalism in education. The students' writing addresses many of the main points of the assigned readings, but very few students meaningfully apply those points to their own classroom practice.

I walk over to a small group of students before class on the first day of the semester. This group of four are all students I have taught previously, and know by name. Three of the students are taking my course in addition to their final course, which involves writing their Master's thesis. "So, how do feel about your (Master's) projects? Are you satisfied with your topic, and where you want to be with your planning?" I ask. Jackie looks up, smiles brightly and says "Yes, I am all set. I feel really good about being ready to complete my project." Jackie is a young, third-grade teacher. She was hired by a school district with an excellent reputation right out of undergraduate school, taught for a year, and began working toward her MAT. Her confidence about her final project does not surprise the students sitting around her. They, however, do not volunteer how their own projects were going.

Students are working in small groups to develop strategies for primary grade students to self-evaluate their math knowledge. As I move through the classroom, observing group dynamics and information shared, I become concerned that most of the students have misunderstood the task. I am caught off-guard because last semester's class caught on quickly to the same explanation and exercise. Do I backtrack with more explanation and examples, or should I extend the time-period for this exercise and provide more scaffolding with these small groups? For next week's class their self-assessment assignments are due. Will the grades on those assignments reflect their understanding of child self-assessment, or will they discourage the students on their way to understanding?

The vignettes above provide snapshots of the complex, dynamic process that teaching is at all levels; one that involves constant decision-making. Our graduate students in Early Childhood Education at Oakland University are teachers of young children during the day, and students in the evenings. They are as diverse in their styles, personalities, and skills as the children they teach. The dynamic nature of the teaching-and-learning process demands systematic ongoing evaluation and constant shaping and reshaping of teaching. To do so requires thoughtful observation and ongoing evaluation of the teaching and learning experience in the college classroom.

Assessment in university settings takes place at the institutional, school, department, and classroom levels. However, individual faculty are likely to find that assessment at the classroom level has the greatest impact on improving their teaching and student learning. In 1996, at an American Association of Higher Education (AAHE) Assessment Forum, I was introduced to their wonderful resources for studying one's own classroom teaching (AAHE, 1992; Angelo & Cross, 1993). Although, I used several of the strategies prior to this meeting, the AAHE resources served as a validation of my classroom assessment efforts, and offered a more systematic approach.

Although all college classroom teaching requires continuous self-study, a course in authentic early childhood education observation and assessment techniques holds one particularly accountable. This should involve the modeling of appropriate classroom assessment, and the process of utilizing the information gained to best meet the instructional needs of the students. It is within this context that I experimented with various classroom assessment techniques in order to develop and maintain a high quality learning experience in my college classroom. I used classroom assessments to examine the extent to which graduate students met course objectives, and to identify elements of the teaching and learning process that best meet the students' instructional needs. This paper introduces the uses of various classroom assessment techniques and suggests how the information gained can improve college teaching practice.

A variety of classroom assessment techniques can help instructors to be more sensitive to individual students, create more awareness of where understanding is less clear, keep students more engaged and challenged, and model practices helpful to the student's own teaching practice. The steps to this process are to:

- ◇ develop a set of questions one wants to ask about his or her own teaching,
- ◇ select or develop classroom assessment techniques that best address those questions,
- ◇ administer the assessment tasks or strategies,
- ◇ interpret the data,
- ◇ use those data to plan the next teaching/learning experience.

A systematic approach informs on different levels, providing information about how individual students are doing, how they are responding to the course, how the class as a whole is doing, how well the presentation of particular topics and/or strategies promote understanding and application, and how well the course does in general to help students to meet a given set of objectives.

Developing Questions for Classroom Assessment

Angelo and Cross (1993) suggest that faculty improve their teaching focus by asking themselves about the "essential skills and knowledge" they are trying to teach, about whether or not students are learning those, and about ways to help students to learn better. Clarification of goals and objectives is often the place to begin for faculty and their students. Angelo and Cross (1993) provide several ways to do this with students. I try a combination of approaches in my courses, beginning with close examination of the course syllabi to be sure that course goals and objectives are really what were achieved the last time I taught the course.

My strategy for assessing goals is to list the lectures, participatory activities, readings, assignments, films on paper, and list next to each the objectives they are intended to meet. I then rank-order the objectives to enable me to eliminate an objective if the pace of the class is slower than the previous class. Students are asked to do some goal setting at the beginning of each class, and are asked to then match their goals to the course goals in the syllabi. Students discuss the "matches" and "mismatches" in small groups and note those on their papers. Listening in on the discussions, hearing some highlights with the whole class as a representative reports on each small group's work, and reading the students' notes on paper, provides the students and me with an immediate sense for matching expectations. In addition, the end of each course, in a narrative course evaluation conducted by each student, I ask specific questions about the effectiveness of those particular experiences (lectures, exercises, demonstrations) in meeting those objectives. Noting what didn't "work" provides me with meaningful questions to ask in future classroom assessments. Formative classroom assessment techniques are administered periodically throughout the term to continue to gain information concerning how students are learning.

Choosing Classroom Assessment to Fit the Questions

Choosing a classroom assessment task to administer in each class session is the best way to become systematic and include this type of reflection in your repertoire of teaching. However, begin with tasks that are easy to administer and that require less time to interpret the data. The examples below describe some relatively easy classroom assessments I used to answer specific questions.

◇ **Open-ended exercises,** like having students complete "Assessment is...", or "Advocacy in Early Childhood Education is..." can provide a general sense about prior knowledge, attitudes, and interests.

◇ **Discussion cards** that list two or three comments relating assigned readings to the student's own classroom experience (most of our graduate students have teaching jobs) and /or class discussion are helpful. These are assigned for each class, and provide regular feedback about what students are gleaning from the readings, from class, and how they are applying their learning to their own classroom experience. The cards also allow students to ask questions or make comments privately.

◇ **Journals** are simply a longer version of the discussion cards. In courses that involve a practicum classroom experience, I assign journals because application is even more of a focus for those experiences. Longer entries allow students to elaborate on the connections between theory and practice and ask questions of themselves or comment on their classroom practice in relation to that. Reading and responding to journals is time-consuming, but extremely worthwhile in terms of knowing how and when to respond to each student's instructional needs.

◇ **Word journals** are helpful in classes where terms are important to the understanding of the material. Students simply keep terms, their definitions, and an example that illustrates what the term means as a mini-journal.

◇ **Muddiest Point** (Mosteller, 1989) is quick and easy. In classes where concepts are introduced, I ask students to jot their "muddiest point"—the concept or term that is least clear at the end of class—on a piece of paper. Reading their comments and making notes of the frequent misunderstandings tells me exactly where to begin the next class.

◇ **Minute Papers** (Wilson, 1986) provide an avenue to examine student opinions, attitudes, interests, and/or understanding as they are asked to write an answer to a question on an index card in a minute or two.

◇ **How's It Going?** is an adaptation of a final narrative course evaluation, where a few questions are pulled out to ask students mid-way through the course how things are going. Questions may involve the pace of the course, the clarity of information presented and/or criteria for assignments. This way you avoid finding out useful information too late for this group of students.

Soliciting Clear, Ongoing Feedback Takes Courage

Most of us have experienced some harsh criticism from students, especially by way of anonymous, university-wide course evaluations. So why would you ask for this punishment weekly? In my view, asking students for feedback on a regular basis results in more positive, constructive, specific suggestions; in a sense, teaching students to be more effective consumers of the educational process. Focusing on elements of good teaching practice, helps one to maintain a proactive approach versus a defensive one, and keeps feedback from being taken too personally. The satisfaction that comes from regular, constructive feedback can be very rewarding.

Getting Started

Beginning to develop a classroom assessment plan involves gathering some resources, encouraging a colleague or two to embark on this adventure with you, and trying a few simple exercises yourself. These techniques provide immediate rewards, so getting started is the hardest part of the process. Practice will prove how "painless" and fun to administer classroom assessments can be. These techniques help my students to know more about themselves as learners, and help me move closer to the "target" and model meaningful assessment of graduate students in Oakland University's Early Childhood teacher education program.

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Building the Linkages Between Degree Outcomes and the Classroom

Stephen R. Ball
K.C. Roberts-Berke

Overview

Cleary College is a professional baccalaureate institution that confers the Bachelor of Business Administration degree. Founded in 1883 in Ypsilanti, Michigan, it now serves students throughout southeastern Michigan. Its market area is home to more than four million people.

Formal outcomes assessment programs began in 1992, with the formation of the College's Outcomes Assessment Committee. Membership has remained fairly stable, with only about 35% turnover since its inception. The first three years, while crucial to the development of the program, produced frustration and little in the way of tangible results. Most of the effort produced a change in the culture of the institution. A key component in the success of the program and its longevity, is faculty ownership of the process.

The Committee is comprised entirely of faculty: Professors Patricia Allerding, Stephen R. Ball, K.C. Roberts-Berke, Patricia Fudala, Carol Himelhoch, and Art Oake II. Each of these professors chairs a curriculum design committee that is responsible for one of the seven degree level areas (see below). In Fall 1996 Professor Ball was provided resources to start the College's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. Prior to this time all data and analyses had been planned and carried out by faculty members. Professor Roberts-Berke, Director of Faculty Development, plans training and in-service programs for faculty, to enhance understanding and use of outcomes assessment processes.

How do we ensure that the intended outcomes of courses that make up a degree program add up to the degree outcomes envisioned at the degree level? What we expect our graduates to know and be able to do is constantly changing. The challenge is to design a working linkage between the moving target of degree outcomes and the classroom. First, we will discuss some theoretical underpinnings of the program. Then we will discuss the progress and process of implementation of the program. Finally, the Cleary College degree is described in holistic terms, using Stark and Lattuca's academic plan model. This latter is a key ingredient, because the Cleary curriculum is seen as a complex system. The model can be useful in identifying factors that affect the curriculum, which might be overlooked in other, less comprehensive analyses.

The Theoretical Underpinnings of Cleary College's Outcomes Assessment Program

Much of this Outcomes Assessment Program is built on the legacy of the "modernists," such as Ralph Tyler and Hilda Taba (Hunkins & Hammill, 1994). This approach starts with four basic questions: "(a) What educational purposes should the school seek to attain? (b) What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes? (c) How can these educational experiences be effectively organized? (d) How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained?"

Countering this approach are the ideas of "post-modernists," who see the linearity of the modernist ideal as too technocratic. These ideas recognize that indeterminacy is prevalent in higher education; that the foundation of certainty that supports Tyler and Taba are not always found. Doll (1993) suggests four R's for the end of the

20th century to replace the 3 R's at its start. The first of these is *richness,* with enough ambiguity, challenge, depth, and breadth, to encourage learners to interact with the curriculum and those faculty involved in it to construct meaning. The second is *recursion*, an emphasis on "going back" and taking a second look, often with an integrative result. The third is *relations*, or incorporating the systematic relations between subjects into the curriculum. Finally, *rigor* is essential in the curriculum, not only in the acquisition of "certain knowledge" but also in the use of a rigorous critical thinking process to evaluate the body of knowledge.

There is also a belief here that knowledge of business theories and practices is socially constructed, that knowing these helps students become members of the "business community" (Bruffe, 1993). There is, then, basic foundation knowledge that the business curriculum must attain for it to achieve its objectives. To this end, business leaders and successful alumni, as "members in good standing" of this community, are recruited for their input and reactions when the curriculum undergoes faculty revision. Faculty have the final decisions, but stakeholders outside the College are asked to participate.

The Progress and Process of Implementing the Outcomes Assessment Program

Prior to the 1900s. the prevailing culture at Cleary College was fairly typical of most institutions of higher education. Faculty "owned" their own courses, and little coordination between courses was evident, especially with courses outside of the department's discipline. The Inter-disciplinary Committee has worked to develop explicitly those informal linkages that always existed. For instance, even prior to this work, it was necessary for finance students to have sound writing skills so that they could effectively communicate (apply) their management level ideas developed from their financial analyses. Students deficient in writing were not as successful.

It has been the practice at the College to show learning objectives on course syllabi, even prior to the Committee's inception. The College has had a mission statement for many years. It states, "To provide an unequaled business education promoting the career achievement of our students and fostering the success of business enterprises." A gap was discovered between the mission and the courses—the primary means of carrying out the purposes of the College.

Early in the Committee's work, the faculty adopted the Bloom taxonomy of cognitive learning as a preferred method of describing learning outcomes (Bloom, 1956). This decision was not without debate (a pleasant euphemism), but it was felt that the taxonomy provided a good mix—easy to understand (for both faculty and students), universal recognition, and simple to implement. Providing the framework for assessing affective learning is increasingly recognized, by the faculty, as a next step for the program.

Work progressed on cleaning up the course level outcomes for a couple of years; this work has helped to strengthen the new culture of assessment at the College. However, it became increasingly evident that this work was being done in a vacuum. Without the explicit agreement on degree level learning outcomes, the course documentation would always be a "solution in search of a problem."

Degree outcomes have been the recent focus of the faculty's work. At a 1996 workshop, faculty used brainstorming techniques (a variant of Nominal Group Technique) to develop lists of the outcomes most needed for each of the seven degree components: Communication, Civic Preparation, Leadership, Critical Thinking, Business Principles, Major Principles, and Major Practice. These ideas have been pared down into the current faculty thinking regarding outcomes for the Cleary degree. They are shown in Appendix A.

The Outcomes Assessment Program builds on the tradition of the "behavioral objectives movement" in higher education (Himelhoch, 1996). This approach, drawing heavily on the work of Tyler and Bloom, recognizes that learning can be described in behavioral terms, that is, terms that can be observed in the actions of the student, and that those actions can be assessed. Course syllabi are being rewritten in terms that are consistent with (a) the behavioral language needed and (b) Bloom's taxonomy. The latter states that cognitive learning moves through six consecutive levels: *understanding* (memorizing) terms, *comprehension* (restating) concepts, *application* of concepts, *analysis* of complex problems using concepts, *synthesis* of a variety of concepts into new theories, and *evaluation* of theories' usefulness.

The assessment structure developed and implemented in the 1996/1997 academic year uses a 0-4 point scale for each course objective and describes it in three general ways. Each faculty member chooses the point level he/she feels most appropriate based on his/her assessment throughout the term. First is the 0-1 point option, "Below Minimum Competency." The 2-3 point option "Meets or Somewhat Exceeds the Minimum Competency." The final, 4-point, option is "Superior Competency." Use of the 0-4 point scale is consistent with the College's 4-point grading scale and is readily understood by faculty and students. Use of the forced choice for the first two levels provides additional definition for the measurement. It was not used for the "superior" level, since it was felt this would be splitting hairs.

The Committee also has completed preliminary work on some evaluation methods that work best for each of the different Bloom levels. For instance, case problems are better suited to the higher levels of Bloom; whereas the lower levels are better served through multiple-choice, short answer testing. This work is anticipated to be incorporated into master syllabi for each course later in 1997. These master syllabi will then contain (a) course description, (b) course learning outcomes in Bloom level terminology, (c) relation to degree-level outcomes, (d) behavioral descriptions for each competency level for each course level objective, and (e) preferred evaluation methods.

The Cleary College Degree

The Cleary College degree is described here using Stark and Lattuca's (1997) academic plan model, to provide a framework for understanding the environment for outcomes assessment. The *purpose* of the Cleary degree is, in a word, success. The program of study seeks to enable learners to develop and refine the skills, knowledge, abilities, values, and attitudes they need for productive and successful lives, primarily, but not exclusively, in the business arena, and as responsible members of society.

Cleary *learners* are older than "traditional" college students, predominantly 25-40 years of age. Most have prior college experience at other institutions and significant business experience. A prevalent motivation for attending and persisting is to earn their BBA as a requirement for career advancement. As non-traditional students, they bring a wealth of diverse experiences to the learning environment. They are self-sufficient and self-motivated adults who are eager to learn, but typically constrained in their ability to take part in co-curricular activities because of family and professional commitments.

The *content* of the curriculum is described in the following broad categories: civic preparation, critical thinking, leadership, communication, business principles, major core, and major practice. See Appendix A for detail on the Cleary College degree level learning outcome competencies.

The *sequence* of learning is organized primarily within the model provided by Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive learning. Early courses are designed to help the learner master and apply subject principles and to analyze related subject situations using these principles. Later courses assume and use a broad principles knowledge. They continue to enhance analytical skills, while developing synthetic and evaluative abilities across subjects. Learning outcome competencies are defined at both the course and degree level and are used to provide evaluative feedback for learners and faculty. Credit is awarded for demonstrated, non-coursework, prior-learning proficiency.

A variety of *instructional processes* are employed to match learning styles of students with the desired learning outcomes of each course. Lecture is minimized, ideally less than one-third of class time. Socratic questioning, problem solving, and case analysis are some of the preferred methods used to enhance and build on the learner's outside reading and other learning activities. These also include writing essays and case analyses, preparing presentations, working on group projects, and solving problems. Students are encouraged to be active partners in the classroom environment through frequent requests from faculty for feedback on instructional processes.

Instructional resources for courses are determined based on (a) intended learning outcome competencies, (b) abilities and needs of learners, (c) content needs, (d) the nested location (sequence) in relation to other courses, and (e) the processes employed for instruction. Common resources used by learners include texts, faculty, and facilities. In addition, overhead projectors and VCR's are widely available. Increasingly, computer resources, such as Internet and electronic bulletin boards, as well as integrated information management software and computer generated presentations, are employed.

Regular *evaluations* of learning outcomes competencies and learner satisfaction are conducted. These analyses are used by faculty and administration to improve the academic plan. This is an integral part of curriculum planning, which is viewed as an unending cycle of continuous curriculum improvement: planning, implementation, evaluation, and adjustment (planning).

It is primarily in this last stage that outcomes assessment programs operate. But it is clear that only through the integrated analysis of all academic plan components will the assessment of learning outcomes result in data that can be used strategically to improve the curriculum and, therefore, student career success.

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Building the Linkages Between Degree Outcomes and the Classroom

Appendix

Cleary College Degree Level Learning Outcome Competencies

Critical Thinking

1. **Identify fallacies in reasoning.**
2. **Evaluate multi-dimensional problems.**
3. **Apply reason ethically and without bias.**
4. **Compare and contrast competing ideas, and draw conclusions, using appropriately collected data and sound analytical techniques.**
6. **Apply principles of logic in decision-making.**
7. **Ability to judge and evaluate source material.**

Communication

1. Prepare and deliver effective and professional written and oral communications.
2. Use knowledge of computer skills to make multi-media presentations, prepare analyses, and communicate ideas.
3. Use symbolic languages, such as mathematics, to communicate ideas.

Civic Preparation

1. **Demonstrate volunteerism in their community and take an active role in civic decision-making.**
2. **Understand and apply fundamental concepts in economics and political arena.**

Leadership

1. Lead a group to a given common ending.
2. Learn and apply characteristics of an effective leader.
3. Effectively work as a team: Ability to professionally run meetings with peers, subordinates, and superiors, and defend thoughtfully developed positions consistent with the organization's strategic plans and goals.

Major Principles

1. **Demonstrate effective knowledge and skills in planning, organizing, staffing, leading, and controlling operations, as measured against criteria developed by stakeholders in the organization.**
2. **Can effectively analyze financial data to assess business performance and make effective decisions using these analyses in complex business situations.**
3. **Uses market research analyses, and other marketing techniques, to improve the organization's products and services, distribution methods and channels, pricing structure, and promotional campaigns.**
4. **Effectively plans for management information systems and use the information for sound decision-making.**

Major Concentration

1. Reason using discipline's reasoning convention.
2. Competency in major (see specific programs).
3. Demonstrate proficiency in professional exams.
4. Demonstrate learning in major through a tangible product (see specific programs).
5. Practice simulated real world conditions where standard and make sense out of an unstructured problem.

Major Practice

1. **Synthesize business theories and evaluate their usefulness to actual complex business opportunities to an effective result.**
2. **Apply business principles and theories to complex real world business situations.**

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Chapter V

General Education / Critical Thinking

Measuring Moving Targets...◆...◆...◆

102nd Annual Meeting of the North Central Association
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Documenting the Centrality of General Education in the Community/Technical College Curriculum: One College's Response

H.G. Sam Bass
Rick Foral

> There are many roads to learning. People bring different talents and styles of learning to college. Brilliant students in the seminar room may be all thumbs in the lab or studio. Students rich in hands-on experience may not do so well with theory. Students need the opportunity to show their talents and learn in ways that work for them. Then they can be pushed to learning in ways that do not come so easily. (Hatfield, 1995)

Introduction

Nicolet Area Technical College is a small, rural, state-assisted, comprehensive community college located in the northern reaches of Wisconsin. While preparing for a reaccreditation visit in 1995 we discovered that the requirements for an assessment plan, and the demonstration of the centrality of general education within the curriculum presented challenges the College felt were quite formidable especially for technical and vocational programs. An in-depth review by the committees that were formed to respond to these imperatives revealed that we were indeed in compliance with all expectations, but the College needed to find ways to express our compliance to those not familiar with our particular mission, our purpose, or our programs.

The Role of Assessment

In 1989, the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Institutions of Higher Education began an initiative on documenting the assessment of academic achievement of students within its member institutions. This initiative was structured such that student academic achievement was an essential element in assessing overall institutional effectiveness. The process for documenting student academic achievement at member institutions was not prescriptive, but was tied to and expected to flow from an institution's mission and purpose. Simply put, the Commission expected that an appropriate pattern of evidence for meeting mission and purpose must include documentation that the institution assesses the academic achievement of its students *(Handbook of Accreditation, 1994-96).*

The Role of General Institutional Requirement 16

General Institutional Requirement #16 calls for general education "consistent with" an institution's mission and "designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and to promote intellectual inquiry." The Commission's 1994 - 1996 *Handbook of Accreditation* indicates that there are two primary ways to describe the general education component within the institution's curriculum and they are *curricular patterns* and *cognitive experiences* (pp. 45 - 46). The Commission expects that institutions should be able to assess and document student achievement in the outcomes of general education. General education is described as typically including Communication, Mathematics, Humanities, Behavioral Sciences, Natural Science, and Computer Literacy. *Curricular patterns* for these outcomes include disciplinary course work. *Cognitive experiences* are the general education college-level outcomes that may be taught within the context of a course or program that may not be within the curricular pattern of typical general education courses.

The Changing Role of Vocational/Technical Education

The Henry Ford-Frederick Taylor model of industrial production that relied on subdividing labor and mechanizing production served American industry well from the late 19th century until the sixth decade of the 20th century. During the 1960s a shift in American manufacturing occurred when global competition created the need for a less costly work force. The need for workers who could perform their duties, using explicitly defined specific skills working in endless repetition was being reduced. As the semi-skilled manufacturing jobs in the United States moved to sources of cheaper labor outside the country, technical and service jobs increased. The Japanese economy demonstrated that the use of highly skilled labor, an emphasis on quality and customer satisfaction, and a new organization of work were major factors in international competitiveness. The model popularized by W. Edwards Deming referred to as the "total quality work place" began to replace the Ford/Taylor model. Instead of holding workers to simple, explicitly defined tasks, it requires the need for each worker to perform a broad spectrum of more complex tasks, and be prepared to exchange jobs with other workers. Instead of relegating workers to mindless manual work and leaving the thinking to management, it requires workers to use their minds and a full range of intellectual skills to diagnose and solve problems, assess the quality of products, and improve production and services (National Assessment of Vocational Education, Interim Report to Congress, 1994). During the 1980s. researchers producing the National Assessment of Vocational Education determined that the use of "total quality work force" methods was very small, representing only 5% of companies with more than 50 employees. A 1992 report revealed that 37% of these companies were using the Deming model or high-performance "total quality" work force methods. This change in the American workplace, which seems to be gaining momentum, has contributed to the movement for the integration of academic, and vocational/technical education. Integration seeks to develop and improve the intellectual capabilities of students by the use of applied learning, consistent with the need to think clearly at work, to master a variety of complex tasks, to rotate jobs, and to perform quality control. Integration changes the focus of education from specific vocational/technical skills to broader and more generally applicable intellectual, academic, and occupational skills consistent with the breadth, flexibility, and qualities of mind needed in the high-performance workplace (National Assessment of Vocational Education: Interim Report to Congress, 1994).

Contextualized Learning and Curriculum Integration

Loren Resnik (1987) at the University of Pittsburgh contends that students' learning is enhanced when general education outcomes are taught and assessed in the context of the vocational/technical curriculum. Proponents of integrating academic and vocational/technical education have adopted contextualized education as one of the theoretical bases of the movement. Adelman (1990) observes that vocational education courses could provide an ideal context for learning academic concepts in work relevant situations. The Perkins Act requires that Title II, Part C funds, which provide the bulk of assistance monies to local school districts and higher education institutions, be used to "provide vocational education in programs that...integrate academic and vocational education...through coherent sequences of courses so that students achieve both academic and occupational competencies" (The National Assessment of Vocational Education: Interim Report to Congress, 1994).

Karweit (1993) describes contextual learning and expresses the core of the idea as being "dependent upon and embedded in the contexts and activity in which it takes place." In comparing learning in and outside the school, Resnik (1987), the leading theorist of contextualized education, as well as other advocates, cite examples of people who can perform fairly complex mathematical calculations to solve real-life problems but have difficulty with similar problems in the abstract classroom. Karweit (1993) has found that functional context education methods reduce time requirements, reduce attrition rates, and improve students' overall performance. The case for integrated, contextual education and the requirement by professional, state, regional, and national agencies for us to pursue high skill, technical curricula provides us with compelling reasons to pursue a contextually integrated and aligned education process.

The Nicolet College Response

Nicolet College faculty, administration, and staff realized early on that informing the stake holders of the College of our assessment plan for student academic achievement, documenting and delivering the institutional outcomes (general education), and expressing each of these imperatives in terms that were understandable by these stake holders was extremely important with regard to institutional accountability.

Building upon the work of Resnick (1987), the task force on assessment began to explore the role of general education within the context of the various vocational and technical programs offered by the College. At the same time the Self-Study Committee began to identify the "core abilities" associated with the College curricula. An institutional in-service program, with all faculty participating, was devoted exclusively to the identification of these "core abilities." Core abilities were defined as being those outcomes that every student in a program of substantial length would be taught and assessed for, before leaving the institution's curriculum. These "core abilities" or "institutional outcomes" were closely correlated to the "general education" outcomes identified by NCA.

☐ Designing the Outcomes Matrices

The next step was to identify those core abilities that are taught and assessed within the context of the college's programs and courses. The assessment task force designed a course matrix and program matrix that are used to identify where, within the curriculum, "core abilities" or the outcomes of general education were taught then formatively and summatively assessed. The faculty recognized that many learning assessments would not evaluate general education outcomes in and of themselves, but would do so as part of and in the context of the assessment of specific course or programmatic outcomes.

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the way in which the matrices were designed.

☐ Program and Course Outcome Validation

The task force collected and used a wide variety of resources for the identification of academic achievement, or the general education outcomes, within the context of courses. These resources were used to identify and/or validate what faculty had established as the academic outcomes within a course or program. Included in these resources were DACUM results, national skill standards products, various trade and professional resources, and state education agency studies of technical and vocational education. These outcomes, as they were taught and assessed within the curriculum, were then assigned point values in the following method: Program outcomes that had a primary, or direct, summative (Scriven, 1980) relationship to the core abilities were given a point value of 5; Program outcomes that had a secondary relationship, or formative relationship (Scriven, 1980; Cronbach, 1980), to core abilities were given a point value of 3; Program outcomes that had no direct relationship to core abilities were given a value of 0. This process allowed the faculty to evaluate how effectively general education outcomes were met in the context of the program curriculum as a *cognitive experience.*

A *curricular pattern* was identified for those outcomes of general education not assessed, or only partially assessed as cognitive experiences within the context of the diploma or degree program. These approaches clearly illustrate and document that general education is central to the mission and purpose of our institution, its programs, and its courses. This activity also creates a very compelling platform from which the curricular pattern for the delivery of general education outcomes within a program may be identified.

Our intensive assessment process has had a positive collegial effect upon the entire college community and solidified the curriculum. The strengths and weaknesses of the programs and courses are now discussed in non-threatening collaborations between the program and general education faculty. The integrity, balance, and quality of the degree programs and courses at Nicolet College have been greatly enhanced by this process. We feel certain that this effort will allow us to advance our curriculum, mission, and purpose well into the next century.

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Figure 1

Automotive Technician

Institutional Outcomes Matrix – Relationship to Program Outcomes

P - Primary Relationship (5 points)
S - Secondary Relationship (3 points)
O - Not Directly Related (0 points)

Program Outcomes	Core Abilities							
	Educational Program Competence	Solid Foundation Skills	Effective Communications	Critical Thinking Skills	Self-Directed Inquiry and Growth	Self Awareness and Esteem	Community Commitment	Global Awareness and Sensitivity
• Conduct automotive service diagnosis and repair with a focus upon customer satisfaction.								
• Acquire the learning skills required to continue technical career development.								
• Demonstrate a level of professional image, attitude, and appearance that will contribute to the attainment of a technician's and his/her employer's goals.								
• Perform automotive service, parts procurement, and parts disposal in an environmentally sensitive manner.								
• Apply electrical and electronics principles to the diagnosis and repair of automotive systems.								
• Adapt to and cope with the elements of change in the automotive service industry.								
• Demonstrate the use of trade-specific jargon.								
• Develop, evaluate, synthesize, and employ problem-solving strategies in an automotive service setting.								
• Develop and maintain successful interpersonal relationships in an automotive service setting.								
• Interpret the economics of the workplace as a technician in an automotive service setting.								
• Use process-specific specialized automotive service equipment to diagnose and repair automotive systems.								
• Use industry-standard communication and reference systems to conduct automotive service.								
• Diagnose, service, and repair automotive engine systems.								
• Diagnose, service, and repair automotive automatic transmission and transaxle systems.								
• Diagnose, service, and repair automotive manual drivetrain and axle systems.								

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Automotive Technician

Institutional Outcomes Matrix: Relationship to Program Outcomes

Core Abilities

P - Primary Relationship (5 points)
S - Secondary Relationship (3 points)
O - Not Directly Related (0 points)

Program Outcomes	Educational Program Competence	Solid Foundation Skills	Effective Communications	Critical Thinking Skills	Self-Directed Inquiry and Growth	Self Awareness and Esteem	Community Commitment	Global Awareness and Sensitivity
• Diagnose, service, and repair automotive suspension and steering systems.								
• Diagnose, service, and repair automotive brake systems.								
• Diagnose, service, and repair automotive chassis electrical systems.								
• Diagnose, service, and repair automotive heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems.								
• Diagnose, service, and repair automotive engine performance systems.								

Figure 2

Program Outcomes Matrix

Program Courses

Core Abilities	404-303 Auto Tech Perf	442-305 Fund of Wld	804-301 Cont Arith	404-305 Auto Tech Chas	801-304 Appl Com Wrt	806-369 Bas Phys Scien	806-370 Intro DC CXirc	404-306 Aut Tech En Brak	809-348 Psyc of Living	103-300 Com Basic	404-304 Auto Tech Trans
1. Educational program competence											
2. Solid foundation skills											
3. Effective communications											
4. Critical thinking skills											
5. Self-directed inquiry and growth											
6. Self awareness and esteem											
7. Community commitment											
8. Global awareness and sensitivity											

Figure 3

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Program Outcomes Matrix

	Program Courses										
	404-303 Auto Tech Perf	442-305 Fund of Wld	804-301 Cont Arith	404-305 Auto Tech Chas	801-304 Appl Com Wrt	806-369 Bas Phys Scien	806-370 Intro DC CXirc	404-306 Aut Tech En Brak	809-348 Psyc of Living	103-300 Com Basic	404-304 Auto Tech Trans
Program Outcomes											
• Conduct automotive service diagnosis and repair with a focus upon customer satisfaction.											
• Acquire the learning skills required to continue technical career development.											
• Demonstrate a level of professional image, attitude and appearance that will contribute to the attainment of a technician's and his/her employer's goals.											
• Perform automotive service, parts procurement, and parts disposal in an environmentally sensitive manner.											
• Apply electrical and electronics principles to the diagnosis and repair of automotive systems.											
• Adapt to and cope with the elements of change in the automotive service industry.											
• Demonstrate the use of trade-specific jargon.											
• Develop, evaluate, synthesize, and employ problem-solving strategies in an automotive service setting.											
• Develop and maintain successful interpersonal relationships in an automotive service setting.											
• Interpret the economics of the workplace as a technician in an automotive service setting.											
• Use process-specific specialized automotive service equipment to diagnose and repair automotive systems.											
• Use industry-standard communication and reference systems to conduct automotive service.											
• Diagnose, service, and repair automotive engine systems.											
• Diagnose, service, and repair automotive automatic transmission and transaxle systems.											
• Diagnose, service, and repair automotive manual drivetrain and axle systems.											
• Diagnose, service, and repair automotive suspension and steering systems.											

Figure 3 continued

Measuring Moving Targets: Assessing General Education across the Curriculum of a Two-Year Technical College

Francesca Pluma
Catherine Wilson

The College

Madison Area Technical College (MATC) is a two-year institution that confers associate degrees, diplomas, and certificates in technical areas and associate degrees in Arts and Sciences. Located in south central Wisconsin, MATC has campuses in Madison, Fort Atkinson, Portage, Reedsburg, and Watertown. The college has provided technical training and adult education to community members since 1912. In 1966, the state authorized MATC to offer a college transfer program for students interested in acquiring transferable credits to four-year institutions. Currently, technical, general education, alternative learning, and avocational courses at MATC serve a student population of 47,783, across the five campuses.

The Challenge: General Education and Student Assessment as Moving Targets

In October 1989, North Central Association (NCA) began requiring all its affiliated institutions to develop programs that assess student academic achievement. More recently, NCA affirmed its commitment to student assessment by embedding this requirement into its Criteria for Accreditation. During this same period, the Commission also reemphasized the role of general education as a central requirement (GIR 16) for all undergraduate degree programs.

Both the assessment initiative and the Commission's growing concerns about the centrality of general education as an indicator of higher education pose challenges for a number of two-year technical colleges. For MATC, the challenge was initiated by NCA's request for a student assessment plan that assesses and demonstrates the centrality of general education in all two-year degree and diploma programs. Although our diploma and degree programs require general education courses and conduct a range of student assessments, NCA's request identified four related moving targets for our institution:

- ◇ MATC's mission statement places a primary focus on employment and technical training.
- ◇ The administration and faculty were unclear about how to translate the centrality of general education into the current delivery of educational services, particularly if the directive required the addition of general education courses to our already course-intensive occupational programs.
- ◇ The college lacked internal consensus on the required content and delivery of general education to students in technical programs.
- ◇ A number of faculty perceived the assessment initiative as a potential intrusion into their academic freedom.

Response to the Challenge (Opportunity)

To begin, a number of our administrators met with NCA staff to obtain clarification and suggestions regarding their request. In addition, we sought advice from other technical colleges that demonstrated success in their general education and assessment efforts. This information was brought back to MATC and discussed at all levels of the college. The result was a conscious decision to translate an institutional challenge into an opportunity to make positive curricular and assessment changes that would respond to the needs of our students and their future employers.

The administration and faculty approached this new opportunity by establishing and supporting three faculty committees for identifying, describing, and assessing a core general education curriculum. The goal of the effort was to develop a college-wide initiative that ensures:

- ◇ the administration and assessment of a general education core curriculum that is central and common to all 57 two-year associate degree and diploma programs; and
- ◇ the development of a general education core curriculum and an assessment plan that are faculty developed and owned.

The first committee was charged to clarify a set of general education core abilities and to identify indicators that would serve as standards for their assessment. Faculty in the second committee focused on applying the core abilities and indicators to the college transfer program in Liberal Arts.

Once the core abilities and indicators were refined, verified, and field-tested, the two committees were consolidated into an Assessment Implementation Team (AIT). This group is charged with piloting the core abilities/indicators and gathering assessment data in six programs during the 1996-1997 academic year. At the end of this pilot year, AIT will implement a five-year plan to phase-in the core abilities, indicators, and assessment strategies across the remaining 51 two-year associate degree and diploma programs.

To date (Spring 1997), the outcomes and products resulting from the work of the three faculty groups include:

- ◇ The decision to infuse the core abilities into general education and program content, rather than to require a set of additional general education courses;
- ◇ The development of eight general education core abilities and measurable indicators;
- ◇ Approval, by the College's Instructional Services Division, of the eight general education core abilities and measurable indicators as universal standards for all two-year associate degree and diploma programs;
- ◇ A student-focused core ability philosophy statement that supports life-long learning, by providing students with the opportunity to move as far as their talents and preparation can take them;
- ◇ A course-level matrix (Course Analysis Form) that documents where core ability indicators are taught, the level of curricular emphasis given to each indicator, and how the indicator is assessed;
- ◇ A program level-format that maps course-level information onto a Program Core Ability Matrix;
- ◇ A plan to provide technological support for the collection, input, and analysis of core ability and assessment data at course, program, and institutional levels;
- ◇ A coordinated effort by administrators, faculty, and staff to develop and implement a general education core curriculum and student assessment initiative within a large and diverse two-year technical college.

Critical Processes Used To Guide MATC's Assessment Initiative

The rapid evolution and success of our efforts can be attributed to the coordination of administrators, faculty, and staff, and their support of a series of effective processes that serve as guidelines for our work. Because of the positive impact of these processes, their description and application may be of particular value to similar technical colleges.

☐ Avoid "Ground Zero" Thinking

Build the foundation of your plan on established assessment practices and general education curriculum within the institution. Undoubtedly, there are numerous curricular innovations and related activities being conducted within your college. Identifying faculty, administrators, and staff involved in related activities acknowledges their work, assists in locating a foundation for your future efforts, and locates internal experts who can support and contribute to the college's development of a core general education curriculum and assessment plan.

There are very few new ideas! As much as each college is unique, the likely solution to your general education and student assessment needs can be found in old and borrowed practices. Given the declining funds available for higher education and the time limitations of faculty and administrators, limited resources can be maximized by identifying similar institutions that have model general education and assessment programs. Borrow the model and utilize personnel from the institution as consultants to explain their approach. Innovation and motivation will evolve when faculty and administrators begin to adapt the model to the unique qualities of and challenges faced by your college.

☐ Identify Champions

General education core curriculum development and assessment must have some initial support at administrative, operational, and faculty levels of a college if there is to be any advancement of the initiative. Widespread support for assessment or the centrality of general education in existing curriculum takes time. Therefore, until a "bandwagon" is legitimized, it is critical to have champions at every institutional level to work toward advancing the effort.

Champions must have the opportunity to meet regularly, discuss critical issues, agree upon common goals, share a common language, and identify specific activities to advance the initiative. To avoid "burn-out," champions need to build supportive constituencies. Eventually, these constituencies will be responsible for implementing and fine-tuning the new general education practices and assessment strategies.

☐ Legitimize the Value of Faculty Dialogue

Faculty are essential to the development of a general education core curriculum and student assessment plan. Concomitantly, their contractual role is to provide quality instruction that maximizes student learning for a specified number of courses (MATC's teaching load is four or five classes/semester). Therefore, the role of developer and teacher can quickly be at odds, if a variety of mechanisms are not provided to support faculty to engage in structured, serious dialogue, over an extended period of time. Specific meeting strategies are valuable to use faculty time efficiently and to legitimize the importance of the dialogue, particularly between general education and technical program instructors. Supports and strategies used by MATC include the following:

- ◇ Committee members are selected with diverse opinions and a commitment to completing the general education and assessment objectives according to agreed upon timelines.
- ◇ Faculty from each major instructional division of the college are represented on each committee.
- ◇ A faculty member is selected to facilitate or chair each committee.

◇ An administrator is designated to attend committee meetings, provide support, and serve as a conduit between the committee and related administrative functions of the college.

◇ Committees agree upon a set of objectives and a timeline for their work.

◇ A variety of mechanisms are employed to provide faculty both time and incentive to participate in committee activities (release time, stipends, etc.).

◇ Agendas are developed and sent to all committee members prior to each meeting.

◇ A regular meeting schedule is established for each semester that facilitates faculty attendance and participation.

◇ A secretary, selected from clerical support services, arranges for meetings, takes and disseminates minutes, disseminates reports, develops data formats, types memos, and responds to the information needs of committee members.

☐ Develop a College-Wide Assessment Communication Plan (Marketing Assessment)

The activities and outcomes evolving from general education core curriculum and assessment development need to be marketed to college administrators, faculty, and staff. Avoid being viewed as the "flavor of the month" by periodically updating your college community about the developments and progress of your committee's activities.

Communication can take the form of flyers, quick update presentations at department or division meetings, collegial discussions, brown-bag lunches, or formal presentations at college-wide events, inservice days, and board meetings. The goal of a communication plan should be to "leave no rock unturned."

The communication (marketing) plan must be continuous. One flyer or a series of presentations will not inform everyone. Awareness of the initiative will be promoted through repeated efforts over time.

☐ Budget for General Education Core Development and Assessment

Curriculum development and student assessment in general education core areas require resources; initially, these resources may need to be extensive. During a time when most colleges are experiencing dramatic cut-backs, curriculum development and assessment initiatives may be viewed as "nice" but "not critical" to the functioning of an institution's day-to-day operations. Therefore, core ability and assessment activities must be communicated as methods to demonstrate accountability to the college's internal and external (taxpayer) public. Demonstrating that tax dollars are an investment in the community rather than a cost to the taxpayer can be a very powerful argument in support of most core ability and assessment initiatives.

Obtaining the necessary resource dollars to support the development of a general education core and assessment plan requires that college committees be sensitive to internal budgeting and reporting requirements. Although budgeting and planning cycles seem to come at the "worse possible" time, being aware of the appropriate budgeting forms, providing clear rationales for your requests, and submitting all the necessary forms on the appropriate due dates are critical to obtaining funding.

As you begin the general education core development and assessment activities, do not be alarmed if funds must be "patched together" until the next budget cycle. Initially, finding funds may have to be the responsibility of both the administrators and faculty members of your committees. Funds to support faculty release and stipends may be found in instruction, curriculum development, or staff development budgets. To facilitate a more stable funding base in the future, document your activities and accomplishments. Be bold in communicating your successes and products to your college's decision-makers.

Summary

The fast moving targets of general education and assessment can appear daunting, particularly for institutions focused on employment and technical training outcomes for their students. Fortunately, our institution chose to look at the substance of these issues and their impact on our students' ability to be lifelong learners, into the 21st century. Through the cooperation of our administrators, faculty, and staff, these targets became opportunities to transform MATC. Provided with the necessary support and trust at the outset, teams of faculty, administrators, and staff were given the time and resources to engage in positive dialogue. The result is an infrastructure that stabilizes institutional change, so that meaningful innovation in teaching and learning can be developed, implemented, assessed, and fed back so improvements can be made.

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From Paper to Practice: Fostering Faculty Ownership in General Education Assessment

Marianne Barnett

North Central Association has established that an institution's academic assessment plan should be "articulated and developed by faculty." This paper will suggest ways to develop a general education assessment plan that fosters and develops faculty ownership.

Section A: Perspective

> "To live in an evolutionary spirit means to engage with full ambition and without any reserve in the structure of the present, and yet to let go and flow into a new structure when the right time has come." Erich Jantsch

Defining the Nature of the "Beast"

In a general education discussion, faculty usually agree on one thing: "They own it." And, when faculty discuss assessment of general education, they usually agree on one thing: "They *should* own it." Ownership generally means that faculty control the conversation, or the processes, and the curriculum votes that lead to the current general education program. Because of this notion of "ownership," general education can appear, and has been called by some, a large mysterious "beast" (Smith 1993) that emerges out of faculty curriculum meetings and moves along on its own journey through the courtyards of institutions.

In other words, general education can represent an institutional history of conversations that produced a negotiated program. In the midst of such history, even advancing a general education discussion among faculty can lead to a long series of speeches about the merits or disarray of an institution's general education program. Sometimes discussions are directed from senior faculty to junior faculty and are focused on how the program represents what faculty historically have and will compromise about in curriculum debate. These types of conversations usually impede change and ensure that junior faculty, who often come into the institution with current experience and theoretical concepts that reconsider general education in terms of "new" or "different" approaches, will in no way advance or change the "way things are done." Not only does this leave senior faculty members in power, but it also sets in motion the entrenchment of junior faculty into institutional practices that reproduce the same processes and governance, thereby ensuring that the institution, even in the face of needed change, cannot draw on any new tools or members to engage in change.

A general education program might, therefore, represent a conversational ground riveted with turf battles, scars, and sutures rather than a program developed with specific outcomes geared towards student outcome objectives or linked to the institutional mission.

General Education Assessment: Feeding the Beast

Because an institution's general education program can represent cultural and historical practices of institutional ownership, faculty members may root themselves in processes that impede assessment development. The process itself does not represent a reflection on identified outcome goals, but rather power and survival struggles that may be "real" or long since past. Assessment then, posited on these grounds, can lead even the steel of heart, to invest in a bullet proof vest before placing the outcomes target in full view.

Because of its situational power—its potential to draw faculty into conversation, debate, and negotiation—general education can be fertile ground for faculty members, who otherwise might feel separated into various programs, courses, and professional interests, to create new practices. The aim of general education assessment may be a long-term interest in creating new grounds not only for outcome measurements but also for transitional conversations, processes, and practices where faculty address institutional goals with different objectives and concepts. Designing "ownership" or fostering a new concept of ownership in general education assessment can create promising "outcomes" for an institution and the students it serves.

General education assessment can reposition institutional practices and the concept of "ownership" by shifting the "traditional" conversations to newly-defined terms and different turf issues, thereby casting new roles, new goals, and different responses among faculty members. In doing so, faculty members can develop the capacity to discuss, negotiate, and respond to challenging questions that arise when outcomes become the focus of the general education program. Shifting the terms of battle, complicating the terms of ownership, even what the "beast" represents, can lead to radical changes in process, power, and faculty development.

The Assessment Director's challenge in establishing general education assessment is to redirect faculty dialogue into productive, outcome-driven tasks, where faculty can actively "own" the outcomes produced through their work.

Owning the Process: Creating the Opportunity for Discussion and Definition

For many institutions, general education is the one common interdisciplinary concern of all faculty members. Even if some departments or programs are not represented in course work, faculty members can be concerned about the skill and content development of students–as preparation for their majors. Because of this, general education assessment development can be an opportunity to develop common institutional definitions that enable discussion among faculty. With careful direction, this shift can create fertile possibilities for redirection within an institution.

The first step is to create common ground or tools for communication about general education assessment by defining terms that the majority of faculty members can adopt for discussion among themselves and as useful guides in establishing criteria for developing an assessment plan. Establishing terms and definitions can provide faculty and students with a framework for understanding what faculty believe an undergraduate education, apart from the major, should accomplish. It can also provide faculty and administration with a framework, working definitions, for assessing the extent to which the general education program provides coherence, integration, and the ability to meet objectives.

Limiting the Charge: Faculty Task Force Committees

Once a common framework has been established, the most important challenge for any institution is to build a process for developing a general education assessment plan that will enable faculty to produce a successful plan. Perhaps the most important objective in assessment should be faculty success in producing and working at a plan that is realistic in terms of the institution and its resources. Another important objective is to produce a plan that allows for maximum faculty participation and "ownership" as assessment is developed and implemented.

Most universities create committee work to ensure faculty participation and input. Traditional faculty committees often take long periods of time and produce very little. Committee work can be ineffective and may even produce burnout among faculty members, which creates another complication in assessment. One approach might be to reconsider the nature of traditional faculty committees in order to set up different working processes for productive assessment development. Most university committees are long-term planning or ongoing committees that meet for one to three years. In most businesses, this model of committee work would not only be resource costly, but would most likely produce a model plan that no longer fits the original goals. In other words, the developed plan was produced for the institution that was in effect when the committee was initially charged.

Since assessment is an ongoing process, structuring faculty participation in a series of committees can produce ongoing involvement and allow for more faculty rotation and participation. Creating a faculty task force committee designed to accomplish one aspect or one defined goal can produce a working committee that is structured to succeed in a short period of time, usually within a semester, with less energy and time drain on each member. A task force committee can be a building block that allows faculty members to focus on a single task, without having to construct the overall building. Limiting tasks allows the faculty committee to focus on what block within the assessment process is needed at a given time and place. This also confines committee discussion to a particular issue or task; thus, faculty members will not be tempted to reinvent the whole general education program or assessment plan. Task force committees also allow the Assessment Director to coordinate overlapping committee work in an assessment plan that is ongoing and evaluated over time in a well-sequenced process.

Section B: Perspective to Action

> "We need to support people in the hunt for unsettling or disconfirming information, and provide them with the resources of time, colleagues, and opportunities for processing the information." Margaret J. Wheatley

Saginaw Valley State University (SVSU) is the only four-year institution of higher education serving East Central Michigan. The University consists of five colleges that house more than 60 programs of study leading to undergraduate and graduate degrees. About 50 percent of SVSU's 8000 students are in the traditional age range for college students; the nontraditional students often have labor-market experience and are preparing for occupational change. More than 90 percent of the students commute to the campus.

In developing Saginaw Valley State University's assessment efforts, the faculty recognized the need both for diverse assessment measures of each program's effectiveness and for coordinated efforts at the institution-wide level. In 1994, the University Academic Assessment Program was established to coordinate and oversee the Assessment Plan, which had been developed by faculty. A University Academic Assessment Advisory Committee, composed of faculty and administrative members that represent each college or program and selected student services, was also established. This Committee reviews and gives input on all written reports for academic assessment.

In 1994-95, each program began assessing its majors' goals and objectives. A faculty committee was also established to develop an assessment plan for general education. After one semester, the committee members realized that general education assessment could be a burden that no one faculty member or single committee was willing to tackle. Thus, the committee members agreed to reorganize and direct their efforts to one aspect of general education assessment.

Task Force Committee 1: Defining the "Beast"

Saginaw Valley State University, like many state institutions, has a broad-based, distributive general education program rather than a core curriculum. Therefore, in such a program, all students do not take the same courses, and course content cannot be the only basis of assessment. Instead, the committee agreed that assessment must focus upon goals of general education, such as basic skills (e.g., writing) and reasoning skills (e.g., critical thinking). Thus, the first step in establishing common ground or tools for discussion about our institution's general education assessment was to create a document that defined terms and definitions for "basic skills" that the majority of faculty members could adopt for discussion among themselves and as useful guides in establishing criteria for developing an assessment plan. Thus faculty members agreed to set aside the development of a general education assessment plan until a rationale was developed that could guide and direct our efforts. The university's newly-developed general education *Rationale* derived its focus and goals from this perspective. The *Rationale* provided faculty and students with a framework for understanding what SVSU's faculty believe an undergraduate education, apart from the major, should accomplish. It provided faculty and administration with a framework and working definitions to assess the extent to which the program provided coherence, integration, and the ability to meet its own objectives.

Task Force Committee 2: Feeding the Beast

Following the *Rationale* development, a second faculty task force committee was asked to create a proposal for a general education assessment plan. The committee was asked to meet over the course of one semester and was given a deadline for the completion of its document. Two members of the first committee agreed to remain on the second committee to provide continuity.

The second task force committee agreed that the purposes of SVSU's General Education Program, as reflected in the *Rationale* and *9 Objectives*, could be grouped for purposes of assessment into three main categories: affective knowledge, cognitive knowledge, and critical thinking skills/knowledge. By designing outcome measures to address these three categories, the committee sought to design an academic assessment plan that could, over the course of a year, give outcome measures on all *9 Objectives*.

The committee also sought to design an assessment plan that ensured that faculty would both design and direct the assessment measures and the discussion of outcomes. The committee provided opportunities within the assessment plan for faculty to participate in ongoing task force committees.

In March 1996, the General Education Program Assessment Plan was presented to the University Academic Assessment Advisory Committee, which accepted the Plan. General Education Program assessment began in Fall Semester 1996.

In 1996-97, the University's General Education Program began assessment, employing the following procedures:

◇ During each fall and winter semester, a general education assessment committee will be selected. It will include faculty members from each of the five colleges, the majority of whom are currently teaching a general education course (volunteers only). The faculty members will be responsible for development of:

  — a set of "prompts" (questions, case studies, a response context, such as a film/story) to which students respond in three areas: affective knowledge, cognitive knowledge, and critical thinking skills/knowledge; the General Education Assessment Committee has developed frameworks to guide prompt development in each of the three areas;

  — criteria for evaluation of outcomes;

  — a time frame (a series of class periods or Saturdays) to administer and holistically examine the outcome; and

  — a report that documents this process and accounts for outcome measurements. The report will be submitted to the Academic Assessment Director, for inclusion in the University Academic Assessment Annual Report, and to the governing body for the University General Education Program for formal review. A formal review will be conducted every three years in order to assess established patterns of evidence. This information will be presented to the faculty for review and program enhancement.

  The Academic Assessment Director will coordinate this process.

◇ A general education response instrument will be developed by the University Academic Assessment Director, in coordination with the Academic Assessment Advisory Committee, to be given to students at various intervals—entrance, transfer, current, and graduating levels. This instrument will reflect students' conceptions of general education issues and the program itself during their course of studies. The University Assessment Director will coordinate the survey process.

◇ The University Assessment Director will coordinate overlapping assessment efforts among departments and the general education program for additional assessment processes and outcome measures. These efforts will be documented in the University Academic Assessment Annual Report.

Taking Charge: Creating the Opportunity for Faculty Ownership

Saginaw Valley State University's General Education Program Assessment Plan is structured to create opportunity for faculty members to work in small task force committees; their initial goal is to design, within established frameworks, a prompt evaluation process and time frame for completion. The assessment plan creates opportunity for faculty members to discuss, define, and share ownership. In the process, faculty members develop definitions that may reshape their previous concepts about general education and allow for other forms of conversation among faculty members. As faculty members develop different perspectives from assessing outcomes, they also may learn to redefine the "beast" in terms that are linked more to institutional goals than to historical turf wars. Sometimes discovering a new perspective is a product of doing the task.

Saginaw Valley State University is committed to a continuous cycle of review and improvement in its General Education Program. Its assessment plan has been designed to include a wide range of assessment measures and processes that will be used on institutional and programmatic levels to reflect and evaluate the link between the Program's *Rationale, Objectives* and outcomes. Faculty and units will use this information to improve the General Education Program, as indicated. The Director of Academic Affairs-Assessment will maintain confidential records of actual assessment data for the General Education Program.

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Integrating the Assessment of General Education into the Classroom: A Two-Year College Model

Ruth Benander
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Introduction

Raymond Walters College (RWC) is challenged with assessing general education outcomes across the curricula, while taking into account its multiple missions and a student population with diverse educational goals. To assess critical thinking/quantitative reasoning, a key outcome of general education, the faculty Academic Assessment Committee (AAC) has developed and is implementing an assessment plan that will be carried out within the classroom, guided by each faculty member's pedagogy, and used for departmental and general education deliberations. The plan requires all full-time faculty in the college to design and use a set of criteria and standards that will measure critical thinking and/or quantitative reasoning skills in the context of regular course assignments and tests. The results of these assessments will become part of the departmental and college feedback process.

Description of the Problem

Raymond Walters College is a two-year branch campus of the University of Cincinnati. Its functional mission statement recognizes multiple missions:

- ◇ preparing students to transfer to the University of Cincinnati and other baccalaureate granting institutions;
- ◇ providing curricula for technical programs that lead to associate degrees; and
- ◇ providing educational opportunities for non-degree seeking students, whether for their personal enrichment or for worker retraining.

Given the wide ranging nature of its mission and programs, the college does not require all students to satisfy distributional general education requirements, nor does it specify a core general education curriculum. Instead, the college faculty has drafted and approved a set of common goals for general education at Raymond Walters College regardless of the student's specific educational goal.

NCA requires that all programs have a coherent component of general education with articulated outcomes for student academic achievement, that faculty have ownership and control over general education, and that faculty systematically and comprehensively review the general education curriculum. The Raymond Walters college mission states our general education philosophy:

> Ultimately the College works toward the creation of an informed citizenry with the ability to think critically, communicate effectively, and solve problems. The college strives to provide a general education which promotes tolerance, lifelong learning and a devotion to free inquiry and free expression, to assure its graduates

> are individuals of character more sensitive to the needs of community, more competent to contribute to society, and more civil in habits of thought, speech and action.

Based on this philosophical statement, the committee wrote practical outcome statements for general education to be measured in the first cycle of assessment;

- ◇ Graduates of RWC will be able to write effectively.
- ◇ Graduates of RWC will be able to demonstrate effective critical thinking/quantitative reasoning skills.

Once the general education outcomes were defined, the college AAC began to wrestle with devising a plan to assess the attainment of those outcomes across the college. After exploring many methods and considering the issues and faculty concerns involved in implementing either a student portfolio plan or standardized testing, the committee proposed the adoption of a direct measurement of learning outcomes conducted within the college's classrooms. The goal was to ensure that learning was being effectively assessed in the classrooms, with clear objectives, assignments, and criteria, and then to use that information to help improve classroom, departmental, and institutional instruction. Crucial to this process was a scoring rubric by which faculty criteria and standards for student learning in each classroom could be made explicit. For this purpose, the AAC chose a scoring procedure known as "Primary Trait Assessment" (PTA), which had been developed to score student work for the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Definition of Primary Trait Assessment

Primary trait assessment is a method of stating explicitly the criteria and standards for evaluation of student performance of an assignment or test. The professor identifies the traits that will be evaluated and ranks the student's performance of each trait on a scale of "most effective" to "least effective" realization of the assignment goals. On this scale, the level of the student's performance is ranked explicitly so that the student knows how she is being evaluated. The instructor has created the scale for direct application to the assignment the student is performing, so that if the entire class does poorly on the assignment, it is clear to the instructor what difficulties the class may share with one another. This recursive feedback of primary trait assessment can be used to inform classroom and departmental improvement.

How Raymond Walters College Incorporated Primary Trait Assessment

Working with Barbara Walvoord, then at the University of Cincinnati, a group of faculty members volunteered to participate in a pilot study. In the fall of 1995, Barbara Walvoord and the AAC presented PTA as a technique for measuring critical thinking/quantitative reasoning skills in individual faculty members' classes.

Following the presentation of PTA and the report of the pilot study group, the faculty agreed that the use of classroom data to measure critical thinking/quantitative reasoning skills was an appropriate tool for the college to use. It was agreed that all full-time faculty members would contribute one test or assignment from one of their courses. The test/assignments were to be those that the professors felt used critical thinking or quantitative reasoning skills in their disciplines. Each professor needed to develop a primary trait scale to assess the test/assignment and to score the work of his or her own students. Department members would meet during the academic year to share their assessment data and results, and participate in writing a department summary of the discussions. These discussions would not only lead to improvement in the test/assignment, but also generate new teaching and curricular ideas that could be tried and reviewed in subsequent years, and thus, demonstrate the feedback loop, as required in the assessment cycle. The test/assignment, primary trait scales, and department summaries would be kept in the office of academic affairs. These summaries would be used to write a college summary, thereby meeting NCA's expectation of institution-wide assessment of general education.

The Raymond Walters College faculty felt this approach could assess student academic achievement in general education, allow the faculty to maintain maximum control, and keep the process as simple as possible for departments to administer. This process took much longer to effect than it does to read about it. The following is a timeline that outlines the steps Raymond Walters College has followed in implementing the assessment process.

Brief History of General Education Assessment	
1967	RWC opened as a state supported two-year college of a municipally owned university.
1992	State and NCA mandates turned RWC's attention to functional mission statement and assessment planning.
1992	The College formed an AAC, which, in turn, formed several subcommittees, including one on general education.
1993	Pilot study (standardized test - general education) met with concern by RWC faculty.
1995	Barbara Walvoord met with the general education subcommittee to discuss the possible use of primary trait assessment as a means of assessing critical thinking and/or quantitative reasoning skills (part of the overall general education assessment plan).
1995	A group of faculty members chose to take part in a pilot study of primary trait assessment for use in the classroom and as a general education assessment tool for the college.
1995	RWC fall convocation was on primary trait assessment.
1995	At a college faculty meeting, the college faculty passed a motion that primary trait assessment would be used to assess students' critical thinking and quantitative reasoning skills.
1995	Follow-up session held in November, with a "poster session" held in January 1996.
1996	October, AAC attended a workshop, conducted by Barbara Walvoord, to develop a document that would guide department discussions of primary trait assessment.
1996	By October, 80 percent of the faculty had developed a primary trait scale for use in the classroom.
1997	Guidelines for writing the department report are published.

Conclusion

The presenters discuss the process by which they created this plan, present the methodology of primary trait assessment and give examples of its use, and discuss the methods devised by the committee implementing the plan across the college. In addition, the presenters outline a model for data collection and analysis within academic departments and the completion of the feedback loop. As this presentation shows, the use of primary trait assessment is particularly appropriate for a two-year college, because it is an effective tool for measuring student learning and promotes the improvement of teaching, as well as for allowing all faculty and departments to participate in the assessment of general education outcomes.

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Assessing Critical Thinking: A Campus-Wide Program for Raising Awareness and Measuring a Core Value

Karen L. Schmidt
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Introduction

The Student Learning Outcomes Assessment effort at Chandler-Gilbert Community College (C-GCC) is in the midst of its maiden voyage of the outcomes assessment odyssey. Recent successful completion of the North Central Association accreditation cycle has both validated completed efforts and encouraged us to move forward into uncharted waters. Although the formal campus program is still in the "raising awareness" stage, the transition from introduction to acceptance has already taken hold.

C-GCC has a long tradition of strong innovative instruction and learning-based programs. Its commitment to "continuous improvement" came long before involvement in the NCA model and is founded in the assumption that assessment is needed to advance the faculty's commitment to a learning environment, to provide a base of evidence for program planning and decision-making, and to increase our efforts at improving student achievement.

Motivation, Commitment, and Leadership

The NCA accreditation process provided the motivation for C-GCC to establish a plan for outcomes and assessment. It helped maintain focus on three essential criteria: an instructional link to the institution's mission and goals; faculty involvement in plan development; and attention to continuous improvement. Institutional and district-wide initiatives coincided with the NCA year of plan development and piloting. The Chancellor of the Maricopa Community College District had established a desire to shift from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning. C-GCC's own Dean of Instruction projected a vision of an "assessment week" as a celebration of student successes. District Instructional Councils have begun conversations about creating common outcomes for general education.

A previous campus plan established an assessment program that resembled a bottom-up program, with individual instructor and classroom assessment as the foundation of the plan. Too much variability, too little reliability, and disconnectedness resulted in NCA's request for a more sophisticated plan. The current model was designed as a multi-level approach, that placed campus-wide assessment on the first of a three-tiered focus of the overall plan, and in which core values to be assessed were generated by faculty. Assessment will occur at C-GCC at the campus-wide, divisional, and individual classroom levels.

College leaders assured success of the plan; it was established early on by many campus factions. The Dean of Instruction was a visible and outspoken advocate of the role of assessment to improve learning. The Academic Leadership Council (division chairpersons) reinforced its importance in divisional sectors. The Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee, composed of volunteer division representatives and chaired by "lead" faculty members, served as program planners.

Issues and Considerations

Embedded throughout the process were conversations and decisions about philosophical and pragmatic issues that had equal opportunity to either ensure success or hinder the campus assessment program.

- The program relied heavily on people, but required a substantial budget.
- The drive and direction had to come from faculty, who had to "own" the project.
- Attention had to be given both to the promises and pitfalls of change. As a result, fallout from resistance, intimidation, and uncertainty had to be reconciled.
- Instructor accountability was a big concern. Many educators had a long-standing fear of assessment and the subsequent accountability associated with it. The program would have to assure confidence that the resulting information would serve a variety of audiences and purposes, but at the same time, would not instill intimidation or fear about how the information might be used.
- A plethora of professional knowledge, often ambiguous, about critical thinking and personal development and the ability to measure them.
- A need to steer the assessment initiative where we wanted it to go, including multiple, alternative, and self-authored instruments.
- Matching the framework for an assessment program established by NCA.

Characteristics and Process

1. **Establish the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee.** The purpose of this committee is to facilitate operation of the assessment plan. Continuity and representation are key factors in creating a stable governing body.
2. **Develop an initial plan and timeline.** The schedule ensured ample time for development, pilot, implementation, and revision phases. A three-tiered plan allowed for assessment at three levels: campus-wide, division, and classroom.
3. **Determine outcomes.** A series of formal gatherings of faculty to discuss and come to a consensus about commonly held values.
4. **Communicate and educate.** A variety of communication measures and extensive faculty development opportunities were initiated to both raise awareness and visibility of the assessment program, and to educate" faculty about the role of assessment and effective measures.
5. **Create assessment instruments.** Attention was given to the ideas of multiple and varied assessments tools.
6. **Pilot the assessment measures.** Special focus was on reliability of instruments, time efficiency, data collection, and changes that might result.
7. **Revise.** Aspects of the plan itself, definitions of outcomes, and measurement instruments underwent significant changes as a result of the pilot.
8. **Renew communication efforts.** The commitment to have faculty involved in interpreting results, revising, and making key decisions about changes generated a whole new cycle of communication among faculty. Having established both common values and a common vocabulary of assessment, the effort here was to involve more faculty, particularly in faculty development efforts.
9. **Develop division plans.** Integrated curricular and discipline-specific courses or clusters of courses were charged with establishing their own plans for outcomes specific to content and course competencies.

10. **Face challenges, change, and charge ahead.** Having successfully implemented the assessment program and achieved NCA validation, C-GCC is determined to forge ahead with more sophisticated assessment measures, increased focus on division plans, and continued focus on the role of assessment in teaching and learning.

Communication

The success of the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan can largely be attributed to the use of effective communication strategies. Utilizing a variety of communication methods allows faculty, administration, staff, and students at Chandler-Gilbert Community College a continued focus on student learning outcomes.

Students are made aware of our core values through a statement of definition and purpose in all course syllabi, the student handbook, and the college catalog. Faculty are encouraged to "use the language" that will make students familiar with the program and how it may apply in each instructor's class.

Faculty are kept abreast through the use of electronic mail and printed copies to adjunct faculty without access to e-mail. Information distributed via e-mail includes minutes from the meetings of the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee, special announcements, flyers, and reminders of assessment-related activities, such as Assessment Week, workshops, and special meetings. There is also a voice mail account established prior to and during Assessment Week to answer faculty questions.

A variety of printed materials also keep faculty aware of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment issues. "Brain Storm" is a series of instructional guides addressing teaching and assessing critical thinking and personal development. In addition, communiques announcing and reminding faculty of assessment events are distributed and posted, important assessment dates are printed in the college calendar. To ensure continuous improvement, written feedback is gathered from all faculty at the conclusion of Assessment Week each semester. Follow-up measures and decisions made as a direct result of faculty feedback are either announced or presented for faculty deliberation and vote.

A campus "Report Card" that includes assessment data, observations, and implications for instruction and learning is produced and distributed annually.

Perhaps our best source of information is through verbal communication. Awareness and acceptance have improved as result of "word of mouth" passing on and clarification of background, purpose, and procedures. Also, each division has a representative on the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee who serves as liaison between division and administration. Committee members lead workshops, report at monthly residential faculty meetings, and address full- and part-time faculty during the faculty orientation activities prior to the beginning of each semester.

Current Challenges of Continuous Improvement Plan

Many challenges loom on the horizon in the long-term to ensure a comprehensive, credible and completely meaningful assessment program. For the meantime, there are three areas of focus for immediate steps toward continuous improvement: Campus-wide faculty/staff development, refinement and implementation of divisional plans, and data feedback loops. Faculty/staff development is proceeding primarily through assessment workshops intended for all faculty, and periodic publications also provide ideas and insights from recent research or the experience of educational practitioners. Since our collective campus experience with assessment has so far included a great deal of controversy about varying and alternative assessment methods, this has quite naturally sparked a fairly high level of interest about assessment methods, and we foresee the continuation of periodic (two to three per semester) workshops to maintain high interest among faculty and then use that interest as impetus to foster additional meaningful change. At some point in the near future, performance and authentic assessment measures (portfolios, projects, etc.) will need to be implemented on a more general scale than they are currently. Here again, the strong support of our Dean of Instruction will continue to be instrumental in providing the resources needed to enable/encourage our large adjunct faculty community to make use of these workshops.

Since the development of the initial division plans for assessment, the challenge is now to assure that they are moving forward and being modified as faculty understanding of assessment increases, and as the faculty's "vision" of what the core values should "look like" becomes more concrete in each division. As a small campus, many of our divisions are extremely diverse (for instance, the Social and Behavioral Sciences Division includes areas as different as economics and physical education), and the divisional focus is really on operationalizing the discipline-specific assessment plans. Ultimately, as those plans become reality and data are generated, continuous improvement will take the form of comparing outcomes in each particular course, and trying to identify the variables that promote critical thinking and personal development. The challenges eventually will be to cluster courses to reach common academic outcomes, to assimilate division/discipline data into the campus-wide "Report Card," and to assure some semblance of common standards of critical thinking and personal development for outbound students.

The collection and dissemination of data, and creating specific, structured feedback loops to drive continuous improvement are probably our biggest challenge. While anecdotal evidence has provided invaluable information (and impetus) for faculty across campus, we recognize the need for more formal systems that are designed to offer data to use in making decisions about curriculum, staffing, and logistics. We are certain that we will continue to collect and distribute aggregated data from our campus-wide assessment instruments, both as a means to retain the focus on desired outcomes and to (hopefully) document improvement in results, however slight or slow. As the instruments we use are modified and increased to better align with our definitions of the outcomes, the nature of the data may change, but the need to provide the data to all faculty will remain. At the division/discipline level, data that are specific to each section of each course will be published for faculty (possibly, external audiences, as well) so they can compare their results with the general results for the course or discipline and discover curricular changes (content and/or methodology) that are demonstrably more successful in achieving the desired outcomes. We have and will continue to be very sensitive about how data are used. The primary emphasis must remain, "How can we better help students achieve and develop more sophisticated critical thinking and personal development skills?" not, "How can we evaluate whether faculty are doing what we believe they should be doing?" Our success with the program depends on minimizing the fear and competition factors and maximizing the learning and cooperation factors.

Final Thoughts

Chandler-Gilbert Community College's effort towards a comprehensive and successful assessment program is not unlike that of many community colleges across the nation. Our voyage is precarious, the direction somewhat uncharted, but the destination is clearly established—increased acquisition of at least two outcomes values by both our academic and business communities.

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Assessment of General Education–Act II: Implementation

Bet Becker

Act I: The Search

The search for ways to assess general education at Southwestern Oklahoma State University began in 1991. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education had issued an edict requiring assessment of entry level, mid-level (general education) outcomes and student satisfaction at all state institutions of higher education. From the beginning, assessment of general education presented the greatest challenge. A significant revision of the University Mission Statement and the approval of a new general education program in 1994 increased the complexity of the assessment effort.

Piloting various standardized instruments to allow norm comparisons for basic skills and finding that little was realized from an expensive, time-consuming, and unpopular ordeal each semester made the search even more critical. Reviews of the literature, discussions with various authors of journal articles, on-site visits with practitioners, and lengthy discussions among members of the University Assessment Committee led to the selection of curriculum-embedded assessment as the most suitable option. Edward Smith, an educational consultant who had worked closely with Peter Ewell, recommended this method after he had analyzed Southwestern's mission and goals.

Act II: Implementation

Concern about progression from "having a plan" to "making the plan work" replaced euphoria of finding an option. Success depended on faculty ownership of the whole process, and that ownership was based on effective communication of the Assessment Committee's expectations. Faculty would be responsible for designing, conducting, analyzing, and reporting assessment of each of their general education courses. All faculty teaching sections of each course would articulate, cooperatively, their teaching and learning objectives and determine how effective course assessment could be accomplished.

Research indicates that one of the most effective ways to create change within an institution is through administrative leadership. That leadership was provided by the university President, chief academic officer, and council of deans, as they endorsed the curriculum-embedded method of assessment recommended by the University Assessment Committee. Strong University support of curriculum-embedded assessment allowed the Assessment and General Education committees to begin implementation. The Director of General Education and Director of Assessment and their respective committees were responsible for overseeing the implementation process, which included the following steps:

1. Collect syllabi for all general education courses.
2. Compare goals and objectives on syllabi with university-wide goals for general education contained within the Mission Statement.
3. Conduct awareness sessions with general education faculty grouped by specific course settings. Sessions included:
    a) a review of specific course information,

   b) a review of university ownership and expectations for general education outcomes,

   c) plans for the collection of data,

   d) decisions regarding the use of data, and

   e) decisions related to access of information.

4. Conduct follow-up sessions, course by course, to allow for:

   a) articulation of common course goals,

   b) clarification of teaching or learning objectives,

   c) discussion of teaching and evaluation methods, and

   d) decision about how assessment could be accomplished.

Initial meetings with faculty were held during Fall 1995. Follow-up sessions began, with some groups, during the fall term and were scheduled with all during Spring 1996. To report that time constraints, created by 28 group sessions on the Weatherford Campus and 22 on the Sayre Campus, were great is an understatement. All meetings were co-chaired by the Director of General Education, the Director of Assessment, and the respective department chairperson. This method seemed to be the most desirable for allowing in-depth exploration of the process for each general education course. It bears repeating that the key to success relied totally on faculty willingness to accept the responsibility for general education assessment. The consensus was that time for full discussion of all issues would enhance the possibility of faculty acceptance. Some faculty had no experience in endeavors of this type, and some didn't have a burning desire to gain that experience. The majority were receptive to the plan and willing to invest in assessment, as a way to improve instruction.

Assessment of general education, using curriculum-embedded methods, was implemented in Fall 1996 on both campuses of Southwestern. Thomas Angelo and Patricia Cross (1993) are credited with pioneering the use of classroom assessment that focuses on what, how, and how well students learn. This method deals with teaching and learning processes, teaching outcomes, and how all can be improved. Even though true classroom assessment as defined by Angelo (1991) was highly encouraged, few faculty were willing to rely on formative, non-graded data exclusively. They felt more confident using other forms of in-class assessments with which they evaluated student learning everyday: papers, projects, exams, presentations, etc. Some assessment methods used by faculty in the general education courses are based in the affective realm rather than the cognitive. Students' feelings and beliefs, though not considered quite as scientifically measurable, are a component of overall assessment.

At this writing, initial reports for the first semester of implementation indicate that faculty are already modifying their objectives. Data from one semester are not expected to provide a wide body of evidence, but collection of data for successive terms should reveal trends and substantiate strengths and weaknesses. Summary data from each course will be provided to the University Assessment and General Education committees and academic administrators. An overall State of General Education at Southwestern report will be prepared annually for faculty and students.

Act III: Change

What does Act III promise? Change. Changes in assessment methods, how results are viewed, reporting of results, and ideally, positive changes in improved methods of teaching. Since improvement of student learning is one of the goals of the assessment program at Southwestern, one positive has already emerged. Faculty report that discussions of what, why, and how they teach may be among the most valuable benefits of the process. This has been true particularly as novices interacted with experienced faculty.

Assumptions are that a) general education assessment is a mammoth quest, b) success relies on faculty ownership, and c) continued success depends upon both open dialogue among faculty and administrators and orientation of new faculty members.

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Chapter VI

The Role of Institutional Planning in a Time of Rapid Change

Measuring Moving Targets...◆...◆...◆

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Linking Strategic Planning and Institutional Self-Study in a Research I Institution in Transition

Darwin D. Hendel
Thomas Scott

Introduction

General guidelines about institutional self-study suggest the importance of linkages with strategic planning processes, but relatively little discussion has occurred concerning the advantages and disadvantages of such a linkage. Although institutional strategic planning processes have been used at the University of Minnesota for more than two decades, the most recent cycle began shortly before the onset of the formal institutional self-study process that preceded the team visit to the Twin Cities campus in May 1996.

This institutional case study focuses on those contextual issues and processes that affect linking strategic planning with institutional self-study in comprehensive doctoral institutions with multiple missions. The presentation reflects on the process used to prepare the institutional Self-Study Report, the approach used to respond to the General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria for Accreditation, the specific linkages to collegiate unit planning activities that were occurring simultaneously with the self-study process, the interface with institutional performance measurement and assessment activities, the implications for the organization of the team visit, and institutional changes that affected both the self-study and the formal strategic planning process.

Two central themes emerged in our analysis of the experiences of a Research I institution in linking institutional strategic planning and institutional self-study for purposes of seeking reaccreditation. First, whereas strategic planning suggests a focus on future institutional changes, a comprehensive self-study process describes and evaluates an institution at a particular point in time. When an institution is in the midst of significant major changes, the self-study process becomes even more complicated. Second, establishing clear linkages with institutional strategic planning requires that the institution's educational mission and related activities be considered vis-a-vis its other mission-related activities.

Institutional Context

The University of Minnesota, with four campuses in the Twin Cities, Duluth, Morris, and Crookston, is one of the most comprehensive institutions in the country. The University of Minnesota-Twin Cities ranks among the leading universities in the United States. It was ranked 23rd (11th for public institutions) in Webster and Skinner's 1996 analysis of the 1995 National Research Council's ratings of doctoral programs, and is ranked 16th in federal research and development funding. It includes 20 collegiate units and enrolled 23,688 undergraduate and 11,793 graduate and professional students in fall quarter 1996. It is both the state land-grant university, with a strong tradition of education (undergraduate, graduate, and a wide range of professional programs) and public service, and a major research institution with scholars of national and international reputation. Although institutional accreditation processes consider all mission-related activities, how research and outreach components affect and are affected by an institution's educational mission is of critical importance in the overall institutional self-study process.

With greater frequency and from several sources, institutions of higher education are asked to be increasingly accountable to the constituencies they serve. When the Board of Regents approved the University 2000 Mission, Vision, Strategic Directions and Performance statement on January 14, 1994, the resolution also initiated "the development by the University's central and unit administration and in consultation with the University and unit governance organizations, of critical measures and benchmarks for measuring institutional, campus, and unit performance in realizing the goals of University 2000."

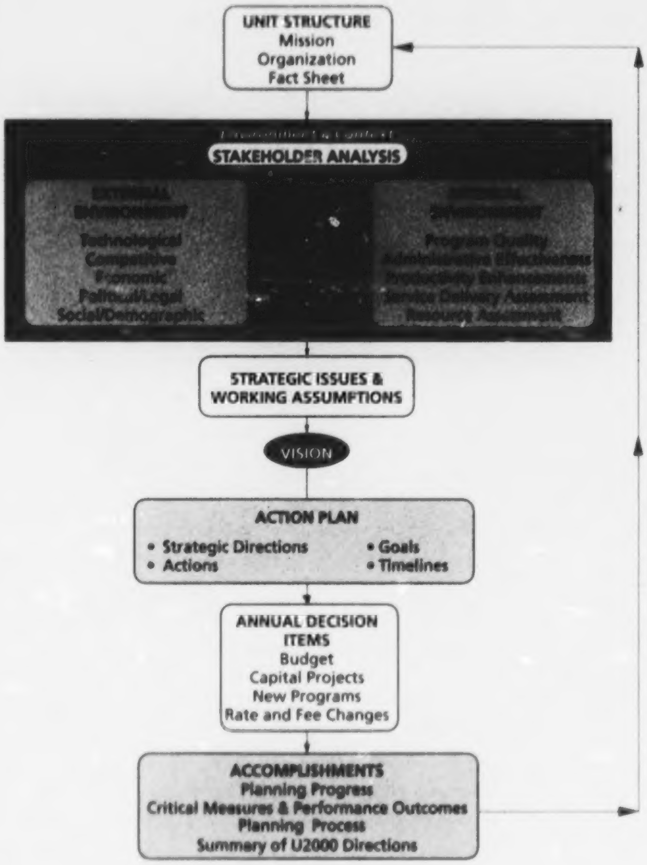

UNIT STRUCTURE
Mission
Organization
Fact Sheet
STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS
EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT
Technological
Competitive
Economic
Political/Legal
Social/Demographic
INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT
Program Quality
Administrative Effectiveness
Productivity Enhancements
Service Delivery Assessment
Resource Assessment
STRATEGIC ISSUES & WORKING ASSUMPTIONS
VISION
ACTION PLAN
• Strategic Directions
• Actions
• Goals
• Timelines
ANNUAL DECISION ITEMS
Budget
Capital Projects
New Programs
Rate and Fee Changes
ACCOMPLISHMENTS
Planning Progress
Critical Measures & Performance Outcomes
Planning Process
Summary of U2000 Directions

Figure 1
Overview of Planning Process

Institutional Self-Study Process

The institutional self-study process was an outgrowth of the Twin Cities Strategic Planning Advisory Committee (SPAC), a 15-member committee appointed in November 1993 to guide the institution's strategic planning efforts for the Twin Cities campus. The chair of the North Central Advisory Committee was involved heavily in the development of the strategic planning process, and attended all of the planning meetings held with collegiate and administrative support units. To avoid duplicating efforts in the institutional self-study process, every attempt was made to fold into the self-study process those evaluative processes and resulting materials that were an integral part of the strategic planning effort. The six strategic directions identified for the institution (i.e., undergraduate education, graduate and professional education, research, outreach and service, user friendliness, and diversity) served as an important focus in the institutional self-study process, but were supplemented with additional themes related to institutional effectiveness and efficiency.

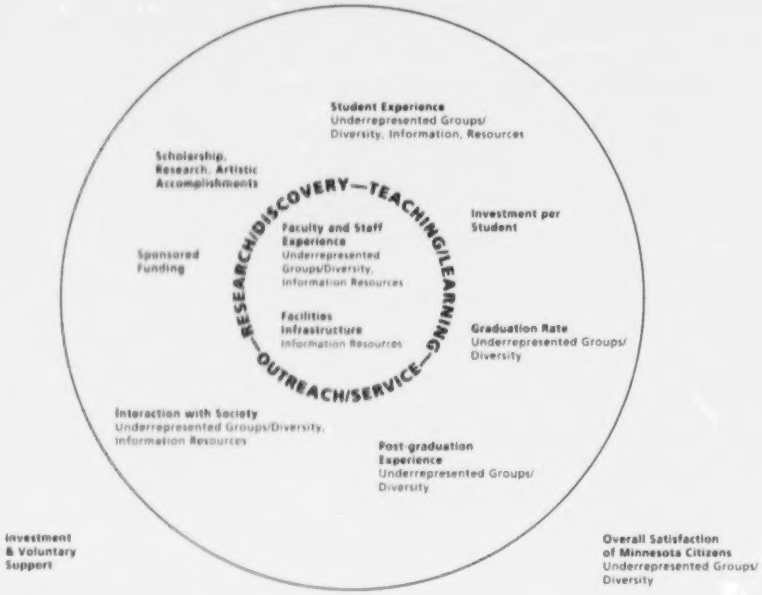
Linkages to Campus and Collegiate Strategic Planning

The collegiate units on the Twin Cities campus are arranged as of July 1, 1995, into three areas, each with its own provost (i.e., Academic Health Center; Arts, Sciences, and Engineering; and Professional Studies), that are the foundation for the mission-related activities of the institution. The unit level strategic planning process consisted of seven interrelated "modules" (unit description, external environment assessment, internal environmental context, strategic issues and working assumptions, vision statement, action plans and decision items, and accomplishments and performance goals) as indicated in Figure 1 above. A condensed version of planning documents was reviewed by the Advisory Committee and, subsequently, included in the Self-Study Report.

Since the previous NCA Team Report in 1986 commented on numerous unit-specific issues, collegiate units were asked to comment on the current status of the issues identified a decade earlier. For most of the collegiate units and for many of the administrative support units, additional information was made available electronically for use by members of the evaluation team based on linkages in the Self-Study Report.

General Institutional Requirements (GIRs) and Criteria for Accreditation

The diskettes used in the preparation of the 1986 Self-Study Report were available and could be used as a starting point in responding to the current GIRs. The Self-Study Coordinator had served as staff support in preparing the 1986 institutional self-study, and played a critical role in linking the previous statements relative to the GIRs with the current documentation effort. Since the institution had changed considerably since the 1986 accreditation, a summary of statistical information was prepared to contrast the institution in 1986 versus in 1996. The Self-Study Report was organized to parallel the six institutional strategic directions in the planning process, but the five Criteria for Accreditation were used as an overall evaluative context for information on activities and accomplishments in each of the six strategic areas. Electronically available information relevant to the five criteria and the six strategic directions was identified early in the preparation of the Self-Study Report, and linkages were specified throughout the Self-Study Report. The institution's approved Assessment Plan served as the framework for addressing assessment concerns in the context of Criterion Three.


Student Experience
Underrepresented Groups/
Diversity, Information, Resources
Scholarship,
Research, Artistic
Accomplishments
RESEARCH/DISCOVERY—TEACHING/LEARNING—OUTREACH/SERVICE—
Investment per
Student
Faculty and Staff
Experience
Underrepresented
Groups/Diversity,
Information Resources
Sponsored
Funding
Facilities
Infrastructure
Information Resources
Graduation Rate
Underrepresented Groups/
Diversity
Interaction with Society
Underrepresented Groups/Diversity,
Information Resources
Post-graduation
Experience
Underrepresented Groups/
Diversity
Investment
& Voluntary
Support
Overall Satisfaction
of Minnesota Citizens
Underrepresented Groups/
Diversity

⇦ **Note: Underrepresented Groups/Diversity** and **Information Resources** measures are incorporated into the other measurement categories as indicated. ⇨

Figure 2
University 2000 Critical Measures

Coordination with Institutional Performance Assessment

During the time period in which the Self-Study Report was prepared, the institution's Office of Planning and Analysis led the development of a set of 14 institutional level critical measures to be used in overall institutional planning and resource allocation decision-making. Figure 2 below indicates those critical measures and their relationship to the institution's mission. To the extent that these efforts were on a somewhat different time schedule, certain types of evaluative data that might typically be found in a Self-Study Report were not yet available. Two of the 14 critical measures served as the basis for the institution's Assessment Plan, the Student Experience and the Post-graduation Experience.

The set of critical measures provides the overall framework for assessing institutional performance in its three mission areas of teaching, research, and outreach, but for purposes of the institutional self-study less emphasis was placed on the research and outreach components.

Planning, Organization, and Conduct of the Team Visit[1]

Scheduling and organizational issues pose a considerable challenge in preparing for a team visit to a large decentralized, multiple mission institution. A tentative schedule for the team visit was shared with the Team

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Chair approximately three months before the visit, and specific members of the evaluation team were assigned, based on their areas of expertise and experience. Most meetings were scheduled in advance with key committees, administrative staff (including all deans and student and academic support staff), but the schedule left ample opportunity for additional non-scheduled visits.

Concurrent Institutional Change Efforts

The most challenging aspect of the institutional self-study process concerned connections and lack thereof with other significant institutional change occurring at the time of the self-study process. Implicit in the notion of self-study is that it aims at a moving target, an educational enterprise and organizational structure that must be described and evaluated before planned changes occur. In this particular situation, numerous major changes (e.g., internal reorganization of collegiate units, the creation of a three-provost model, the sale of University Hospitals, extensive planning for the conversion from a quarter to a semester calendar, and the continuing implementation of Responsibility Center Management) occurred during the year in which the self-study was completed. Observations will be made on how those changes shaped certain aspects of the team visit and influenced the recommendations in Team Report.

Dealing with Unforeseen Developments

In addition to the institutional change efforts that were underway when the self study began, additional developments occurred during the period when the Advisory Committee was completing its work. The most significant of these was the Board of Regents' proposed significant changes in the Tenure Code. Other major developments (e.g., the proposed elimination of a collegiate unit and the resignation of senior administrators) occurred in the three months preceding the team visit.

Whereas Self-Study Reports are prepared to give an accurate and comprehensive picture of the institution, when linkages are made to institutional strategic planning, it becomes necessary to describe past, current, and expected future institutional change as a result of strategic planning. Given the time-bound nature of the team visit and the opportunity to visit with numerous individuals and groups, there is a high likelihood that varying conclusions may emerge, in part because of events surrounding the dates of the team visit.

The Team Report and Recommendations, Public Disclosure, and Next Steps

The Team Report was drafted and shared with the institution according to established guidelines, and was consistent with the comments in the exit interview. The recommendation that a focus visit occur in 1999-2000 to examine the status of three institutional change issues reinforced the institution's perspective that the institution was "breaking new ground" in making significant changes. When the President shared the Team Report and the institution's formal response with the Board of Regents, all pertinent documents were made available through the World Wide Web.

Retrospective Evaluation of Linkages with Strategic Planning

As is true in most approaches to institutional self-study, linking self-study with ongoing institutional strategic planning had both advantages and disadvantages. The primary advantages were four. First, as indicated, there were many significant issues under discussion as the self-study process began. As the Advisory Committee discussed its role it became clear that attracting and sustaining attention to the self-study process depended on its linkage to the overall planning process. Second, because the self-study examined the university's history over the preceding decade, while planning was more focused on current and future circumstances, the accreditation process gave the institution the opportunity to consider those circumstances in a broader historical context. Third, there were significant efficiencies realized by using many of the same documents—data, evaluative processes, and staff resources—developed as part of the planning process in the self-study process. In addition, because much of the language developed in the planning context could be used in the self-study, communication with various constituencies was simplified. Finally, because the Advisory Committee was the only group reviewing both the university's recent history and its strategic planning effort, it was in an excellent position to evaluate, critically, the planning effort.

Two themes emerged from this evaluation, which affected both the Self-Study Report and the discussions with the evaluation team. First, two new elements (i.e., institutional effectiveness and efficiency) were added to the six strategic directions established by the Board of Regents and were discussed in the Self-Study Report. Second, discussion in the Advisory Committee indicated a clear sense that there was more than enough change already underway at the institution. This became an important theme during the team visit, was reflected in the exit interview, and was incorporated into the team's final report. The team visit became an important opportunity for members of the Advisory Committee and members of the campus community more broadly to express concerns about the pace and intensity of recent changes at the university and to receive, in turn, a perspective on these institutional changes from members of the evaluation team.

There are potential disadvantages associated with linking accreditation activities with strategic planning, particularly if there is considerable disagreement at the institution about its future direction. Presumably, these are more likely to occur in those institutions where there are discrepancies between the planning process and the self-study process and report and where the team visit becomes an opportunity for interested parties to air their disagreements. Another disadvantage is that the self-study process becomes considerably more complicated.

Despite the risks, the experience at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities suggests that if planning is being considered or already underway, there are significant advantages to linking planning activities to the accreditation process. The self-study provides a context for evaluating the planning effort from both an historical and an external perspective and forces the institution to describe and analyze itself for others and for members of the evaluation team. An open and inclusive team visit can provide an excellent opportunity to discuss and clarify important institutional issues and future directions.

[1] All aspects of the self-study process, the preparation and distribution of the Self-Study Report, and the team visit itself, benefited from information technologies that have only recently become available. A related presentation at this conference, "Technological Innovations in the Self-Study Process," provides a commentary and evaluation of the role of information technology throughout the process.

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Shooting Blindfolded

Carolyn Tennant
Gordon Anderson

There is no doubt about it: as academicians, we know our target. After all, we've studied that target, and we've hit it many times. Just get out those notes and shake off a little dust. Print the syllabus off the computer—after changing the dates, of course—and, well, what were those other changes we had in mind last year? Actually, it matters little; we know our target well enough to hit it blindfolded! Those concentric circles have stayed quite intact and stable over the years, and it is intuitively obvious that this is a fine target, one worthy of hitting. There's no doubt that we can hit it again. Wait. Where is that sound of the solid "thunk" made when the arrow strikes the target?

Introduction

In his national bestseller, *How the Irish Saved Civilization,* Thomas Cahill (1995) discusses Roman education at the fall of the empire by pointing to Ausonius, a *grammaticus* or professor of Latin at one of the late empire's greatest universities, Bordeaux. In fact, after 30 years in academe, Ausonius had become so famous that he was called to the Golden Palace in Milan as the tutor to Gratian, son of the western emperor Valentinian.

One might well suppose that Ausonius was the best that his generation could offer: creative, original, the culmination of years of golden learning and literary excellence, military and political organization, architectural and artistic beauty. However, Ausonius has since been judged as unoriginal, bland, lacking genuine emotion, providing a scarcity of insights, and being merely an imitator. Why, then, was Ausonius so honored? Well, as Gibbon said, "The poetical fame of Ausonius condemns the taste of his age."

Could this be so? Could an entire society—even within its educational institutions—lose its ability to know the difference between what is laudatory and what is mediocre? As Cahill said in reference to Ausonius, "How could a grown man have spent so much time so foolishly? Well, it's what everyone else was doing. This is a static world. Civilized life, like the cultivation of Ausonius' magnificent Bordeaux vineyards, lies in doing well what has been done before. Doing the expected is the highest value—and the second highest is like it: receiving the appropriate admiration of one's peers for doing it." Indeed, Ausonius received multiple honors, finally even arriving at the highest position any Roman of non-royal family could achieve, that of consul.

While the educators were busy shooting blindfolded, the target had moved. Since basically the entire society was unaware of the target's shifting, society and education continued their dance. Therefore, when Alaric, barbarian king of the Visogoths, arrived at the gates of Rome in the early fifth century, no one was prepared to deal with it. After all, who *were* these strange people? There was certainly someone somewhere in this bigger-than-life empire who could handle this somehow.

The point? It is extremely serious for us as a society and as an educational system to be shooting blindfolded. Educators, of all people, should be examining the changes in the world around us and constantly working to adjust our educational input. How else will our future leaders have the education necessary to recognize our society's changing points of weakness, including the skills to adjust for those weaknesses and the ability to communicate their danger so we can all be prepared? We live in the midst of massive and continuous shifts—shifts that are even greater than those that led to the demise of the Roman Empire. There is no doubt that we need to observe constantly, to reassess our purposes and our *raison d'etre,* to reposition ourselves accordingly, and to re-evaluate our accomplishments in terms of what is presently needed in our world today. In short, educators **never** have good reason to shoot blindfolded—not even for fun, not even for a minute, let alone out of laziness or apathy.

Should it be tempting to dismiss all of this wide-eyed target practice as something we are already accomplishing, here is a question to consider: *How seriously and intensively, how creatively and unusually, with what freshness* *and energy, did your institution carry out your last self-study?* Is it possible that we have become so comfortable with the old target—examined hundreds of times, conceptualized in the same ways, so familiar and easy to hit—that we find the very task of contemplating it to be meaningless and boring? As institutional archers, we should become very unsettled if we do not consistently hear the twang of the arrows as they strike the target. However, could it be that we've forgotten to listen? When we should be yanking off the blindfold to find out what the problem is, God forbid that the blindfold has become too comfortable to remove or that our eyes can no longer see in the light. Our academic world can become too predictable, a kind of virtual reality shooting gallery in which we respond within a computer-generated space, acting as if it is reality. In this environment, we can trip over things, jerk in response, move forward or backward. There's just one problem. It's not the real world.

The potential problem with self-study is that we handle the process according to our organizational culture. Unfortunately, this provides us with perceptions that measure our strengths and weaknesses according to our institutional biases. After all, don't we already "know" what our problems, needs, and weaknesses are? All we need to do is talk about them again and write it down for the report. Allowing the self-study process to become less than self-revelatory, however, is a major leadership error.

A lack of periodic, fresh, in-depth self-reflection may well signify the death knoll for an educational institution. Although this truth has become painfully clear in the business world, higher education seems to remain blissfully unaware. Hopefully, it will not take an Alaric to wake us up and provide us with the belated energy and motivated passion to accomplish a truly meaningful self-study. The voucher system could be just such a barbarian for the public elementary and secondary schools.

Especially at this time in history with the exponential increase of knowledge coupled with a computer-compacted world-village, society cannot long support an educational system that is more like a behemoth than a chameleon. Self-study is an opportunity to poke a finger in the institutional yawn. Its process can be used to force the behemoth to dance—maybe even lose some weight. It can redefine the target and pull off the blindfolds. May it never be said of us, "Many loose their arrows; few strike the target."

The Real Situation

North Central Bible College, a private Christian college with just over 1,000 students located in downtown Minneapolis since 1930, found itself in this general state of predictability during its recent self-study process. First of all, although we were fairly progressive, even that had become predictable. We had to find some new ways of thinking about ourselves that would prod us out of our institutional ruts, the usual ways of responding to situations and to each other. When it came to form, we needed a different weapon as well as a different approach and methodology. It was also time to look at the target more carefully, to bring it into focus again. After all, is it really such a great stunt to be able to do this shot blindfolded? Finally, the ho-hum attitudes needed to be changed. Could we see clearly at all if we just weren't in the mood or, worse yet, were convinced that there wasn't even anything else to be seen?

As a Consultant-Evaluator, Carolyn Tennant, Vice President for Institutional Life and Innovation at North Central Bible College, Minneapolis, has noted that a certain educational malaise often hinders the fresh look necessary for an institution to carry out a truly meaningful and useful self-study. This "same old way" of viewing things has often affected academia's processes of strategic planning and the quality of its assessment plans as well. If we follow a process by rote or develop a plan as a required product, we are in essence shooting blindfolded.

As a new college president who wanted to renew the college vision and to provide fresh meaning to the strategic planning process of the college, Gordon Anderson, President at North Central Bible College, likewise desired institutional personnel to gain a clearer view of the target. He wanted to rip off some blindfolds, but he wanted to do it in a non-threatening manner.

The following three new processes were designed to instigate change, and each will be shared in the workshop from a practical vantage point. They assisted us in the self-study process, in revitalizing strategic planning, and in contributing to the honing of assessment. Better yet, they changed our educational culture.

The Development of "End-Sought Statements"

What is the target? Can the archer articulate exactly what is being aimed at and why that is particularly important? In order to assist the academic archers in bringing the target into fresh focus, a new process was designed for NCBC called "end-sought statements."

During a faculty inservice day, each department's faculty members worked together to develop a clearly delineated statement that described the student who graduates from their department. They sought for descriptors that defined a successful product as opposed to an unsuccessful one. Although this sounds like a relatively simple task, it was much more challenging than one might assume to provide an agreed-upon, succinct description of the "product" of the department. The statement needed to be holistic, give a description of the student as opposed to what the program provided, and articulate valued results. In short, it defined the target more clearly than ever before.

The statements were subsequently discussed by the Strategic Planning Committee, which is chaired by the president of the college, and it was noted that some of the end-soughts were missing emphases that it was assumed they valued and focused upon. This instigated a dialogue about various concerns, followed by a re-working of the statements. In some cases it also triggered an examination of present curriculum to decide if all knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to produce this "end-sought" were actually being taught or were duly emphasized within the curriculum. The curriculum was entirely re-written in one major as a result of this process, and discussion of change in other programs occurred and continues.

These newly understood "targets" have become fundamental to assessment as well as to curriculum development. This process of developing clear-cut statements also allowed for the conceptualization of "life tasks," which are real life situations that are designed to measure progress toward the end-soughts. These will be used in the student portfolios and in other assessment processes.

Furthermore, faculty now communicate their desired results to our constituencies with more clarity and assurance than ever before. There is a unity of communication by department members to outside groups regarding their "targets," and there is a foundation to the department's ongoing curriculum discussions.

The Use of Appreciative Inquiry

An institutional culture can become so ingrained that it can't be perceived, let alone changed. This culture is often constricting and myopic with fashionable pessimism being the general attitude of choice in higher education. Academia focuses readily on what is not right—what needs to be changed—and what the problems are. Although it is important not to deny reality, an automatically negative approach that is almost entirely problem-oriented tends to dampen both planning and the shaping of vision.

Every institution has an organizational culture. Those who live within it are not necessarily aware of its pervasiveness and hidden boundaries. The borders are there nonetheless and can be discovered when a newcomer is taken aside and told "you just have to understand how we do things around here." There is a common language that becomes easy to understand and is comfortable. This doesn't mean we like everything. As a matter of fact, even our complaints about the system become part of the corporate language and culture. The songs we sing and dance to are part of our identity and a mainstay for our relationships—even uncomfortable ones.

The faculty/administration music, for example, prompts a certain dance. Since administrators are there to make certain decisions, then it becomes uncomfortable if the tune is interrupted by a leader who says "I don't know. I can't make that decision yet because at this time I have no clue what should be done, and I haven't identified anyone else who I think has it figured out yet either." If this sort of new refrain occurs, it is obviously uncomfortable. After all, when things go wrong, there is no one to blame if the leader did not take an expected role at the expected time! In Samuel Goldwyn's immortal phrase, "Include me out."

Actually, it is just such a space that may need to be created purposefully so that the old, comfortable ways of doing things are stirred up and new ways have an opportunity to develop in the void. Perhaps it is the courage to carry out this unusual hiatus that separates out the true leaders. Indeed, it should be the very environment that is established for the self-study and strategic planning processes.

If we are to have the fortitude to do this, we as leaders need time for reflection, renewal, and a step out of the present demands for action, control, and decision-making. A famous story about St. John, brought by Cassian from the east when he came to live in Gaul, may inform our thoughts about this matter. One day, John was found playing with a tame partridge. A rather narrow-minded brother rebuked him for wasting time in this way. John replied, "The bow that is always bent will soon cease to shoot straight." Undoubtedly this applies both to individuals and to institutions. We must unbend the bow now and then, step back, and take a good long look around.

Sir Henry Bessemer, inventor of the Bessemer process for steelmaking said, "I had an immense advantage over many others dealing with the problem, inasmuch as I had no fixed ideas derived from long established practice to control and bias my mind, and did not suffer from the general belief that whatever is, is right." Likewise, it would behoove us to shake off the past and present now and then so that we have room for the future.

With these various thoughts in mind, a model was developed for NCBC utilizing the philosophical seeds of research on appreciative inquiry. Faculty development questions were used in small group discussion, resulting in positive faculty interaction and reaction. The questions led faculty to identify the times in which they were most alive and engaged. This allowed faculty to consider ways of linking personal meaning and connectedness with future ideas and plans for the college. It considered what is most valued in others, the department, and the educational institution, thus shaping the future out of what is best in the present. These related most often to new risktaking approaches to a shifting world and community context. There were various processes we utilized over several faculty inservice days that helped us in fresh approaches to self-study and strategic planning.

Vision

The institutional malaise associated with shooting blindfolded also affected vision. When the departments were first asked to share their departmental vision, these vision statements were generally less than exciting. It was noted that they focused more upon alleviating certain problems rather than considering possibilities. This lent a rather paltry and pallid feel to the dreams of the departments.

Furthermore, their vision statements were coated in an aura of "give us money to take care of this and then everything will be all right." Of course, if money was not available for these things, then nothing could be done. Leaving the process as merely problem-oriented often fed the pessimism, allowing it to be someone else's fault if the resources were not available.

This assumption of helplessness did not allow for the kind of thinking, energy, and strength that could conceptualize a whole new approach. It was a patch job that even waited for the patch to be provided rather than designing a whole new, potentially more efficient and effective way. In this context, a hopelessness can set in that considers change to be impossible until solutions or resources are forthcoming.

The positive methodology inherent in "appreciative inquiry," on the other hand, brought about thinking that helped people to see that the best ideas and solutions often were cost-free. It assisted them in recognizing and defining those areas of personal satisfaction that could be positively built upon to solve problems and move the institution ahead. Individuals saw afresh their personal relationships with the future of the institution, thus leading to new contributions in the redesigning of its vision.

This kind of discussion led to a new institutional vision statement, which in turn went through a process with faculty, strategic planning committee, and board of regents. It ultimately informed the original departmental vision statements, encouraging a fresh look at the future throughout the institution.

Ausonius and Alaric

If Ausonius had but realized that he was shooting blindfolded, would he have been capable and motivated enough to do something about it? If he had known about Alaric, would that have provided a wake-up call? What do we need to change in modern academe to assure that an historian is not sitting a century hence, pondering why we didn't see what was happening. When will self-study, strategic planning, assessment, and other potentially renewing processes be developed with the vigor and motivation that comes from being aware that our Alarics are waiting outside our boundaries as well?

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Doing Effective Strategic Planning in a Higher Education Environment

James B. Rieley

Planning in education is thought by many to be something that we just don't need to do. Hardly. As Yogi Berra is purported to have said, "When you come to a fork in the road, take it." That is where planning in education is today. Education is invariably at a fork in the road and undoubtedly will take it. Unfortunately for the customers of many educational institutions, the choice of direction at the fork is made by guesswork, at best.

In the past 30 years, planning in education has changed dramatically. The 1960s saw times of growth in technical and community colleges in this country. It was a time in which public financing was readily available, and we were responding to very clearly defined needs. The next decade signaled the beginning of colleges looking to business and industry for planning models. It was the time when "MBO went to college." In the 1980s, long-range planning shifted toward strategic planning, and college's looked again to the business community for direction in planning.

Now it is the 1990s; the educational world has changed. Colleges of all types are faced with the same challenges facing business and industry, which include the reduced availability of resources, increasingly high levels of competition, and increasing demands from customers for accountability. A recent study stated that in the next 50 years, the population of the world will double (Pritchett, 1993). At this same time, technology will continue to accelerate. Pritchett states, "Eighty percent of our technological inventions have occurred just since 1900. It is predicted that within the last 15 years of the 20th century we will see as much technological change as there was in the first 85 years. According to the book, *Information Anxiety,* "The fund of information available to us doubles every five years." To be able to deal effectively with such a dynamic environment, we will need to break the educational barriers of how we were taught to think, and move into an innovative thinking mode. Educational institutions are finally beginning to address the issue of quality and effectiveness as strategies to meet these challenges.

Nancy Austin, at a recent presentation, stated, "The first principle of management is that the driving force for the development of new products is not technology, not money, but the imagination of people." This statement has applicability not only for the development of new products, but also encourages education to develop methods to meet the increasing demands of customers, including students and others. Many institutions in this country have the latest in technology, some even have deep financial pockets. However, there is not a single institution that will be able to develop a plan of how it can move forward to meet the challenges of the next 10-20 years without innovative people. People are clearly the most important asset of any organization, whether educationally based or not. It is people who are an educational institution, not its buildings, computer labs, or classrooms.

To become effective, we must learn how to plan. Not only plan for the literal tomorrow, but for the figurative tomorrow. We must learn to plan for the year 2000 and beyond. There are many organizations that are currently developing plans titled, "Something something something for the year 2000." Great! Unfortunately, just putting "2000" on the cover of the plan won't do much to ensure that the organization will still be viable in that year. We need to look carefully at how we do the planning, not how we design planning documents. If we do not develop a plan of how to survive until the year 2000, there is little hope of accomplishing it.

In her book, *Whole Earth Models and Systems,* Donella Meadows states, "We think that because we understand one, we should be able to understand two, because one and one make two." Of course, just because we understand the concept of "one" does not mean that we will understand the concept of "two." To understand the concept of "two," we need to understand the concept of the word, "and." "And" is a linkage, a connector. It provides the linkage between one and one. When we begin to understand the concept of "and," we can begin to understand the outcome of linking *one and one*. This concept does not only apply to mathematics, it also applies to planning. Educational institutions need to understand the importance of linkages required to ensure that developed plans can address the challenges facing them in the future, and understand how people fit into the long-range plan.

This paper will put forth the issues that relate to planning, as well as articulate a continuous loop planning process that works. There are four main elements of effective planning: the development of the plan phase; the implementation phase; the audit phase; and the standardization phase. These phases reflect the steps of the Shewart Cycle. Similar in concept to one developed by John Dewey, the Shewart Cycle delineates the four steps required for effective planning. Referenced for years by W. Edwards Deming, the Shewart Cycle is also known as the PDCA cycle, for its four steps: plan, do, check, act. These four steps give an institution the ability to link the development of an effective planning process to positive organizational outcomes. PDCA has application on any level, from the development of major organizational initiatives or individual departmental improvement plans.

The planning process that I will put forth follows a model that has become recognized for its ability to help an organization move effectively toward its future. The model, Hoshin Planning, is a process that enables an organization to develop a plan, based on the factual reality of a situation, that values the input of everyone concerned, and a process that articulates a viable implementation path for the future. In his new book, Joe Colletti calls this process "focused planning." This title is very accurate, for the process gives an organization the ability to focus its planning efforts on what is truly important, not on what is politically "hot."

Planning Phase

Planning is everyone's responsibility, for it is everyone who will be on the journey into the future. Therefore, it will be critical that everyone have input about how to get there. In most institutions, having everyone involved in the actual planning can become unwieldy, so the cross-sectional group is used. This group should consist of a cross-sectional representation of the college population, to include administration, support staff, faculty, students, and other customers of the college. This means that planning for the future of the college should not be left up simply to those who have the word "planning" on their door. If the college has a population of represented employees, they need to be included, as well. The key to a group working together on the planning process is facilitation.

Before the group convenes for the first time, a facilitator should be assigned to the planning process. This facilitator must have extensive training in both team development and with quality improvement planning tools. It will be the facilitator's responsibility to keep the group moving forward in the planning process and focused on the necessary issues that will result in a plan for both the short- and long-term future of the college. Once a facilitator has been appointed, the group should meet. This initial meeting should be one of familiarization only. In this first session, the beginnings of team formation, the group will need to introduce themselves, develop ground rules for future meetings, and have an overview of the planning process. It is not until the next meeting that the planning itself begins.

Vision

Planning is a function of leadership. Without effective leadership, there will be no need for a college to plan, because without leadership, eventually there will be no college. Leadership gives a college the ability to determine where it wants to go in the future. A function of leadership is the articulation of the vision for a college. This does not mean that the leader, alone, must supply the vision; but that the leader must be able to define what that vision means to everyone in the organization. Too often a vision is developed that is not quite clear, it does not provide everyone the ability to see it. It is a responsibility of the leader to be able to make the vision clear, to be able to define exactly what the vision means for all. The leader must help facilitate an understanding of the vision to provide an opportunity for alignment and commitment from the entire college population. The vision itself can be developed by a group charged with planning.

Indicators of Movement

After development of the vision, the next step in the planning process is the determination of what indicators will signal movement toward that vision. The indicators can be equated to sign posts along the way. These indicators will become a crucial element in the planning process, for without indicators, it will be impossible to measure any progress toward the vision. Indicators are developed through a process known as the affinity process, in which the planning group brainstorms all the indicators they can identify. These outputs are written onto post-it notes in a format of three-five words, and need to contain a verb. The verb is important, for movement toward the vision requires action, and, therefore, an action word can better identify what the indicator will be. Once the group has identified as many indicators as possible, the outputs are sorted into themes. These themes are groups of indicators that have some affinity to each other. The group then develops a title or header card for each theme. The header, also in a three-five word with verb format, is a reflection of all the indicators in each theme. Although only the headers cards initially continue to be used, the entire output is saved both as documentation and for later use.

Development of Baseline

The next step in the planning process is to determine how well the college is moving toward its vision. For this determination, the process uses a tool known as an arachnid chart, which gets its name for its visual similarity to a spider's web. Again, the process begins with the header cards from the affinity process question, "What are the indicators of movement toward the vision?" The cards should be placed in the same locations as they were for the interrelationship digraph. This provides continuity in process and helps achieve alignment among the participants on the outcome. Lines are drawn from the center of the chart to each header card. These lines appear as radii or spokes on a wheel.

Mission

Clarification of the college mission is important, for the mission is a statement of why the college exists. This differs from the vision, which is a statement of future condition. In many colleges, the Mission Statement is an accumulation of many things: mission, vision, rationale for delivery education, list of delivery methods; the list goes on and on. The mission only states the purpose. The purpose is why there is a college, why the college exists. Like the Vision Statement, the Mission Statement should be short and clear, usually 10-15 words. The Mission Statement should not try to define the parameters of the mission—the how—only the why.

With both the vision and mission defined, the next step is to begin achieving alignment throughout the college. This is accomplished through a process known as "catchball." Catchball is nothing more than putting the statements out to the college populations for input. The question to be asked at this point is, "Are you comfortable with the vision of the college; are you comfortable with the mission of the college?" If the responses are highly positive, the process continues; if the responses are negative or not largely positive, the planning group must relook at what it has done to that point. When asking the question of comfort with the vision and mission, effort must be taken to ask for input if the respondents are not comfortable. This input should be used by the group if the catchball process shows lack of alignment.

Critical Processes

With the mission established or clarified, it is key to define how the college achieves it mission. This is done through examining the critical processes that the college uses to meet the needs of its customers. The critical processes, usually in the six to eight range, are defined as "the steps the college uses on an ongoing basis" to meet the needs of the customers. The processes should begin with initial, or pre-customer contact, and end with some sort of educational follow-up.

Determination of Trends

As the process continues, the next step is to begin accumulating data regarding the trends affecting the college. These will be important in the planning process to help establish the groundwork for how the college can move forward. The trends in question include: human resource, financial, environmental, technological, market, and regulatory. The group should brainstorm these trends with prior notice to ensure that the appropriate information is available for the process.

Customer Identification

The trend determination is followed by a listing of all the customers of the college. This listing need not be by name, but by customer group. Again, the listing of customers is a foundational step in planning for how to meet those customers' needs. Customer groups should include the direct customers of the college, the internal customers of the college, and the indirect customers of the college. Ranking the customers is not important, but ensuring that all customer groups have been identified is.

Determination of Customer Needs

The planning group then should go to those customers to learn their needs. Asking customers what they need seems logical, but in many cases, this is not done. The only person who knows what he or she needs is the customer, so he/she needs to be asked. Obviously, it will be impossible to ask all the customers, but it is not unreasonable to pose the question to representatives of each customer group. The question can be presented in various forms, including direct response questions, survey instruments, and/or focus group meetings. At the same time the needs are determined, it is important for the customers to rate the importance of their needs. This is done most effectively through focus group meetings. All the needs are listed, and the attending population rates them as to importance.

Process/Needs Relationship Development

Through the use of a matrix, the relationship between the critical processes and customer needs can be shown graphically. This helps determine which process has the strongest impact on meeting customer needs. Again, the use of a quality improvement tool helps to achieve clarity in the development of the process, giving everyone involved the ability to see the same picture.

Development of College Potentials

The next step in the planning process is to determine the college's abilities. This is done through the affinity process, with the question asked being, "What are the strengths and weaknesses of the college?" Prior to sorting, continue the process with the additional question, "What are the college's opportunities in the future and the threats to those opportunities?" The usual affinity process rules apply with the outcome yielding themes with header cards. As before, the header cards are then duplicated for an interrelationship digraph. This outcome gives the group additional focus and clarity about what needs to be done in the future.

Planning What Needs To Be Done

Up to this point, most of the work of the planning group has been focused on the establishment of information to enable the group to develop the plan. This is where the planning begins. The initial focus of the actual planning is on the long-range plan. In many organizations, what is looked at initially is the one-year plan. This is clearly a mistake. Developing a plan for one year is the same as saying, "On our next vacation, let's travel 400 miles and then see where we are." Most of us would rather say, "This is where we are going. Let's figure out where we need to be by the end of the first day of travel, if we are to complete the trip on time."

This is long-range planning, and from this comes the plan for each part of that journey. In the case of a college, what is best is to focus on what needs to be done in the next three-five years. These "things that need to be done" are specifics that will help the college move toward the vision. The tool for this process is the affinity process. However, prior to the usual affinity sort, a sort is done chronologically.

Sorting and Driver Determination

The chronological sort will break the specifics into groups of things to be done or begun in the first year, things done or begun in the second year, etc. The header cards for this sort should be marked "year 1", "year 2", etc. Subsequently, the post-its in year one are resorted based on affinity. This resort will yield specific themes to be addressed in the next year. This is the first year of a multi-year plan. In comparable terms, it would equate to the first part of a long journey toward a favorable destination. It is the first part of the journey that sets the direction for the entire journey. The themes represented on header cards are then duplicated for an interrelationship digraph, with the driving elements becoming visible. It is those driving elements that become the goals for the first year's plan. These elements should be seen as breakthroughs in the way the college works to satisfy its mission.

It is important to note that in the first year of planning in this manner, it is not unusual to have the first year's goals seem very high level and organizationally wide. This may cause some concern among the planners. Traditionally, when planning, we want to get right to the meat, the "hot" operational goals. Unfortunately, this can be a mistake. Prior to being able to deal effectively with operational issues, an organization must deal with the overall issues that affect the organization as a whole. These may include issues such as organizational culture or behaviors.

These issues may seem somewhat intangible and hard to measure, but that is not the case. The key to being able to measure something is establishing the baseline of where the organization is at a given point in time. Through the use of the tools mentioned, either movement or non-movement can be shown. The key point is that these global, organizational issues are prerequisites to doing the operational issues. The operational issues usually appear in subsequent years.

Force-Field Analysis

The breakthrough goals will not be small, detailed objectives. They will be large themes that can, if implemented effectively, truly change the organization. They give the college the opportunity to improve dramatically the way in which it delivers education. That is what colleges need today to meet the challenges of the future. However, sometimes the breakthrough goals will not be easy to implement. For this reason, it is important to determine what will be the driving and restraining forces that will affect this implementation. The tool that helps to make this determination is a force-field analysis. The forces that will drive the implementation are listed on the left side of a flip chart, and the restraining forces are listed on the right side. The object of this process is to make visible all the issues that will assist or hinder the implementation of a goal or goals. This gives the planning team the ability to further focus on how to deal with these forces.

Implementation Path Development

In addition to the goals, an effective planning process results in several other outputs. These include: objectives, the reason to be working toward each goal; targets, the methods to be used to attain the goals; responsibilities; the person or persons who will be held accountable for the attainment of each target (this does not mean that the responsible person or persons must actually be the one who attains the target, only that they will be accountable for that attainment); measures of success, the "how we will know when the target has been met"; vehicles, the tangible physical evidence of target attainment; and, timelines, the date at which the target will be met. Once all these items have been determined, they are placed on an implementation tree, a tool that visually shows all of the goals, objectives, targets, responsibilities, measures, vehicles, and timelines.

The appropriate implementation program begins with complete dissemination of the planning outcomes and the process itself. This is catchball. Everyone in the organization needs to be able to see the outcomes to ensure that they have a clear understanding of the direction of the college for the future. The planning documents can be equated to a map toward the future of the college. Without this map, it would be impossible for the college to work collectively to get to where it wants and needs to go in the future. The next phase of the planning process is the implementation phase.

Implementation Phase

A planning document that is not used is a waste of resources. It is a waste of the time spent to develop it; it is a waste of the resources used to put it together; and it is a waste of the effort of those who worked on it. Therefore, it must be something that can be implemented effectively. To do this, we need to understand the functional structure of an organization. In most cases, an organization is hierarchical. This means that there is someone at each level of the organization who is accountable for his or her actions and those of the people who report to him or her. This has nothing to do with management styles; it is just a statement of reality. The implementation of the plan works with this relationship.

This process is one of replication; the goals of the organization are met by organizational targets; these targets are attained through the achievement of departmental or divisional means; the departmental or divisional means are achieved through individual means. This process then filters down throughout the organization. At this point, not only does everyone in the organization have the ability to see the overall direction of the college and how it will get there, but everyone also can begin to see what his or her supervisor is going to do to help achieve the college-wide goals. This process gives clear direction to everyone regarding what they need to do to help the college move forward.

Part of the process of implementation is the development of contingencies. The process of contingency development is crucial for long-term planning to be successful. If you were on a long journey in your car across the country and you had a flat tire, you would have the tire fixed and resume the journey. You would not then change the destination. This should be the same for an organizational journey. When calamity hits, we need to be able to deal effectively with the situation and then resume our journey toward the vision. This requires that we ensure that we will be able to deal effectively with those potential calamities. The tool that is used to develop the contingencies is the Process Decision Program Chart or Contingency Chart. This chart graphically shows how to deal with potential problems before they become realities.

To be most effective, the implementation matrix system should be used as the performance review vehicle. Instead of employees being reviewed and evaluated in the typical way, on-job description, this system enables the organization to do review based on what the employee is doing to help contribute to the overall success of the organization as a whole. It is a way to help focus the entire organization on more global, college-wide issues instead of local, departmental issues and directions that may not be in alignment with the overall direction needed to help the college succeed.

Audit Phase

Phase three is the audit phase. A plan is no better than the organization's ability to ensure that it has been followed. The audit phase goes back to the data accumulated in the beginning of the planning process, the needs of the students and other customers of the college. This was the reason to develop a plan, to meet the needs of the customers better. It is those needs that we use to audit the plan. The actual method by which the audit is done uses quality improvement tools for clarity and visibility. Again, at first use, some of these tools may seem complex and awkward, but as the users become more familiar with the process, the level of complexity and awkwardness diminishes rapidly.

The audit process must look to several things: the needs of the customers, how they were met, whether they were met in the prescribed timeline, and whether they were met to the satisfaction of the students and other customers. All of this information can be determined on a "effectiveness matrix." This matrix is, in reality, several matrices in one.

Conclusion

This planning model was developed to assist a college become more effective in its ability to address the needs of its students, as measured by the needs of the customers themselves. This is not inappropriate, for it is the customers of an organization that make the ultimate determination of the quality of that organization's products or services. In the case of education, the customers include students, business and industry, accreditation agencies, taxpayers, and employees. If the college cannot meet the needs of the students and other customers, they will go elsewhere. This lack of revenue, partnership opportunities, accreditation, financial support, and quality educational opportunities. When this happens, the result can be that the college ceases to operate. The issue is that clear.

The rationale for the development of this implementation model is that each college is unique. Each college has differing environmental, fiscal, governance, geographic, and demographic issues affecting its ability to meet the needs of its students effectively. It is, therefore, critical to develop a model that has the flexibility to adapt to the specific situations of each college.

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Strategic Planning in the Framework of a Campus-Wide Vision for the Future

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Part I: The Campus-Wide Framework

A university with an upcoming NCA accreditation process can seize it as an opportunity for strategic planning for the new millennium. The University of Wisconsin-Madison is a case study in maximizing the NCA opportunity. Under Chancellor David Ward's leadership, the 1988 institutional self-study prepared for the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools provided a foundation for today's campus-wide strategic planning framework. This framework is described in *A Vision for the Future: Priorities for UW-Madison in the Next Decade*, which outlines three learning themes and nine priorities. Today's vision document, which was first published in 1995, evolved over seven years and will be an integral part of UW-Madison's 1998 accreditation process. What did the path from the last accreditation exercise to the current blueprint for the future look like?

A 17-member committee of faculty with staff and student representatives led the self-study effort. This group, the Future Directions Committee for the University of Wisconsin-Madison, was charged by the acting chancellor with charting "the best possible directions for this institution." As part of self-study, the Future Directions Committee recommended a series of interrelated goals: recruit, develop, and retain the best faculty, staff, and students; strengthen undergraduate education; excel in research; strengthen the university commitment to public service; ensure an environment of equity and diversity; integrate academic planning and budgeting. These directions were aimed at improving our effectiveness at delivering our mission.

David Ward, then Provost, immediately used the plan in his efforts to strengthen undergraduate education. In 1992, when he became Chancellor, he made *Future Directions* the foundation of his agenda for the next three years. He initiated in-depth planning sessions to refine and operationalize the goals, a process that resulted in an updated version of the future directions.

Also during this time, Chancellor Ward led a process for checking on progress and listening through campus town meetings, focus groups, and surveys. The results of three years of dialogue with campus constituencies and various measures of progress were synthesized into the current campus vision document that challenged us, not merely to improve what were are doing, but also to do some things differently.

It is noteworthy that the current vision document is going through a similar process of discussion and feedback across the campus and, as Part II of this paper will show, the priorities are guiding planning in schools, colleges, departments, and administrative offices.

Learning as the Connecting Theme

Ward writes that one way to create interrelationships among the many specialized functions of a university is to emphasize learning as our unifying goal. "...we perform teaching, research, and public service, and we typically view those as distinct and separate activities. In reality, they are creatively connected as learning" (p.4).

The three learning themes in the vision document include the learning experience, the learning community, and the learning environment. The learning experience theme encompasses efforts to transform learning both inside and outside the classroom. The learning community theme reflects the need for stronger interrelationships among the various specialized programs, functions, and personnel on campus. In describing the organization of the university, he says, "We currently have an intellectual landscape of mine shafts, where most of us are organized in mines, working to deepen the mines, but with not much reflection about corridors that should link us to other miners. We are so poorly connected that we have greatly weakened our shared sense of learning" (p. 5). The learning community theme encompasses such efforts as horizontal linkages, interdisciplinary inquiry, and an increased sense of belonging within the campus as a whole.

The learning environment refers to the physical resources that house and support learning including buildings, space, and technology. "The programmatic needs of the 20th century called for individual, specialized buildings. The programmatic needs of the 21st century will be quite different, requiring the means for quick communication and the capacity to adapt to changing circumstances. We will need the kinds of spaces that serve multiple programs more effectively" (p.7).

The priorities for the future include: maintaining our research preeminence; rethinking our organization; reconceptualizing undergraduate education; encouraging collaboration; maximizing our human resources; updating the Wisconsin idea; joining the global community; using technology wisely; and renewing the campus physical environment.

Several aspects of the transformation that began with the accreditation self-study to the current campus-wide vision should be noted. First, prior to the 1988 self-study, little or no strategic planning occurred at the central administration level or at the school, college, or department levels. The planning that did occur tended to assume a linear extension of the present into the future and was not as sensitive to the turbulence of the environment as strategic planning must be. As a result of the process begun in 1988, every school, college, and department is expected to have a strategic plan.

Second, when David Ward became Chancellor, he built on the foundation that had already been established through the self-study process. This provided continuity and reassured faculty, staff, and students that their efforts of the past would continue to accrue benefits to the institution.

Third, the 1988 *Future Directions* document was not created by a committee sent off to work on its own, in isolation from the campus. The plans emerged from the committee's work throughout the entire campus during the self-study. In the years following the self-study, this living plan, was continuously examined, expanded, and updated. The Chancellor initiated and continues to initiate dialogue and feedback on the current vision document from faculty, staff, students, and external stakeholders. The vision, rather than being an administrative mandate, is a composite of the aspirations of many university players.

Fourth, there is accountability. For each of these priorities, a member of the Provost's staff serves as point person. The role of the point person is to help coordinate efforts around the direction, to ensure that appropriate measures of progress are established, collected, and reported. In short, even though there are many people involved in these efforts, there is one individual to whom others can bring ideas, problems, suggestions. One individual is responsible for keeping an eye on "the whole." It is important to note that the point person may coordinate an effort over which he or she does not have complete or partial functional authority. This "matrix" approach to the priorities reflects desires of both the Chancellor and Provost to nurture horizontal structures, decision-making, and action in the academy. Coordination of the priorities remains one of our most formidable challenges. The academy has few or no models for horizonal leadership and traditional higher education administrative structures do little to facilitate it, but we are creating the model as we go.

Part II. Strategic Planning at the Department Level: Alignment with the Campus Vision

The strategic planning model used across the campus at the University of Wisconsin-Madison is shown in Figure 1. Adaptations of this model have been used at UW-Madison for planning in academic departments, schools, and colleges as well as administrative offices. Examples include the departments of Zoology and Pathology and

Laboratory Medicine, the Graduate School, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, as well as the College of Engineering, University of Wisconsin System Business Programs, student advisement programs, and administrative offices such as accounting, and student services.

The first step in the process is review of mission and asks planners to consider why their entity exists at all. Another key question is, "What is the University's plan?" It is at this point in the planning model that the future directions of the University as well as the directions of the school or college are discussed. Each planning group can consider what the organizational directions mean or could mean for their work.

The Department of Zoology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison engaged in this strategic planning process and found it beneficial both in helping the department achieve short-term goals and for building capacity for the future. Under the leadership of Department Chair Warren Porter, the department identified a vision for the future and three strategic directions that would help the department achieve that vision. (The three overarching strategies

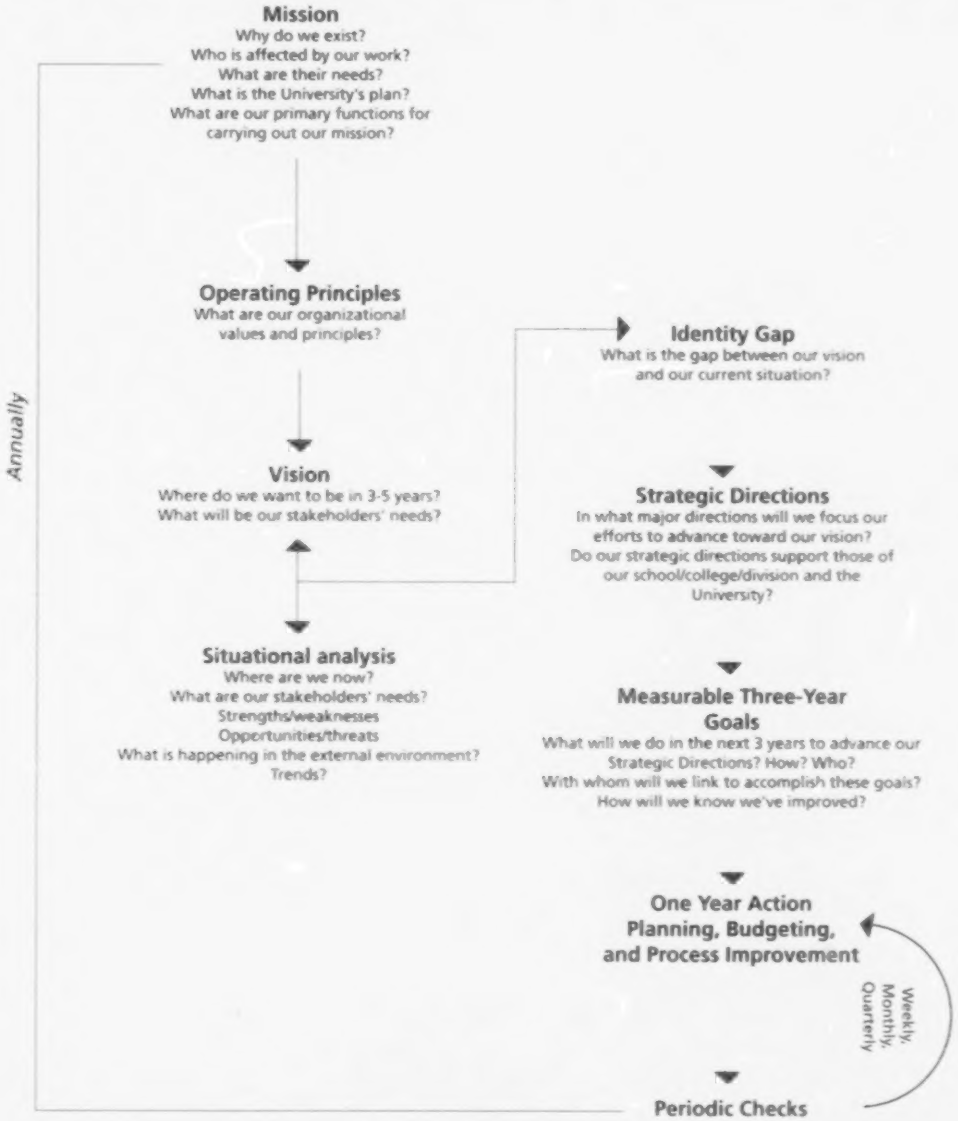
Mission
Why do we exist?
Who is affected by our work?
What are their needs?
What is the University's plan?
What are our primary functions for carrying out our mission?
Operating Principles
What are our organizational values and principles?
Vision
Where do we want to be in 3-5 years?
What will be our stakeholders' needs?
Situational analysis
Where are we now?
What are our stakeholders' needs?
Strengths/weaknesses
Opportunities/threats
What is happening in the external environment?
Trends?
Identity Gap
What is the gap between our vision and our current situation?
Strategic Directions
In what major directions will we focus our efforts to advance toward our vision?
Do our strategic directions support those of our school/college/division and the University?
Measurable Three-Year Goals
What will we do in the next 3 years to advance our Strategic Directions? How? Who?
With whom will we link to accomplish these goals?
How will we know we've improved?
One Year Action Planning, Budgeting, and Process Improvement
Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly
Periodic Checks
Annually

Figure 1

Strategic Planning Model, University of Wisconsin-Madison were to improve instruction, to develop a reward system, and to increase physical and financial resources. Each strategy also has substrategies.) A three-year plan was created with annual goals and semi-annual checks on progress. (The Chancellor was a guest at the department's Spring 1997 strategic planning reporting session.) Some of the goals were referred to existing committees and some required formation of new cross-functional committees. Department faculty and staff chose the goals on which they wished to work. Three one-hour training sessions for creating and maintaining effective committees were held over the lunch hour as regular faculty meetings.

As a result of this planning exercise, the Department of Zoology has seen an increase in revenues from focused attention to fund raising and related fiscal processes. Additional administrative staff time was secured as a direct result of the outstanding plan. Improvements have been made in the undergraduate curriculum. Alternative merit pay plans are being designed and discussed by faculty. Still in the developmental stage, but a direct result of planning, is the EcoSystems Innovations Consortium, a collaborative effort between the department and the business community. Overall, the strategic planning experience has helped unify the department around common efforts.

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Planning Our Preferred Future

Mary Odile Cahoon, O.S.B.

To plan or not to plan? In this day and age, one thing is certain; there will be change. Some feel change is too unpredictable to allow for much planning. Why develop a multi-year plan when we do not know what will happen? Besides, we are so busy meeting the daily and yearly demands of working at learning outcomes assessment or complying with federal regulations that we don't have time. Some have heard, "No amount of planning will ever replace dumb luck!" So why bother? Some feel it is sufficient to have "the plan" in the heads of the CEOs. (This view is limited to a few CEOs.) Most of us take comfort in the attempt to have some control of our future. If we have a clearly-stated mission, as well as a shared vision of what we want to become in the coming years, if we are attuned to changing conditions and open to new opportunities, if the planning process is tied into the budgeting process, strategic planning will have real meaning.

At The College of St. Scholastica planning is a cyclical process. It is never finished. Annual reviews, updating, and revisions are an essential part of the process. This allows incremental rather than cataclysmic change. In terms of management principles, this assumes that a change of 10 percent can be absorbed by an organization, without any major upset.

Unless planning is continual, unless the institutional team begins at an appropriate time to review its past work, perhaps, improving what was stated before, and certainly, taking into account revised data that will show the impact of previously-planned actions and external changes, the planning process will die. On the other hand, when planning is recycled regularly, the burden diminishes, and the planning product will continue to have an impact on the institution.

Several beliefs and principles underlie the planning process at St. Scholastica. They include:

- ◇ Belief in the value and applicability of the Benedictine tradition
- ◇ Belief in the integration of liberal arts with professional education
- ◇ Recognition that the College must be responsive to significant social, political, economic, and technological changes in the community it serves
- ◇ Commitment to financial stability
- ◇ Belief that planning is a process that should be flexible and decentralized; participation by all constituencies and consensual decision-making are valued

The Plenary Planning Commission and each of the academic and administrative departments that participate in the supplementary planning activities are guided by these parameters for their work.

The planning process at The College of St. Scholastica starts in the fall with Plenary Planning Commission (PPC) review of the President's annual institutional report, which reviews the progress toward goals made in the last year. PPC then reviews the Mission Statement and the Vision Statement. Usually there are only minor, if any, changes to be made; although, periodically, there is a major revision to update the language of the statements. PPC next reviews a section called "Mission Statement: Lived Experience," in which specific activities of the past year are cited to document the living out of each aspect of the mission of the College. Following this work, the institutional marketing group identifies any changes in external factors and updates planning assumptions, which PPC then discusses.

By winter, the vice presidents present for PPC discussion, college characteristics and trends in enrollment, retention, students, faculty, revenue sources, facilities, and information technology. With these data, PPC identifies the major institutional strengths and weakness and those factors that seem to be both a strength and a weakness. Although PPC is broadly representative of the College constituencies, with the administrative team, as well as representatives from faculty, administrative staff, hourly staff, and students, input from the total College community is requested at this point. In this way, the College community becomes part of the planning process and has ownership in the plan, and PPC gains fresh insights before goals are formulated.

In spring, PPC reviews the five-year goals and revises them as needed, reflecting progress made toward the goals over the past year, and develops new goals to address any new weakness identified. PPC may also develop goals that will continue to emphasize any new strengths. These goals then go to the Long Range Planning Committee of the Board and on to the Board of Trustees for approval. Goals then go to all of the academic and administrative departments for each to develop departmental objectives for the coming year. Budget requests should reflect activities related to the goals and objectives.

All departments are encouraged to review progress on their objectives twice a year. The administrative team reviews the college-wide objectives in January and again in July. The January review provides a stimulus to renew efforts during the last part of the academic year; the July review provides material for evaluation of the progress made in each area. This evaluation and the administrative objectives for the coming year are shared with the Trustees before the fall meeting of the Board. Trustees also receive the President's annual institutional report, which is a narrative report of progress on the goals.

During the summer, the new volume of *Scholastica Direction* is prepared. This includes the planning process, with any special emphases and planning efforts of the past year, along with the mission and vision statements, external assumptions, institutional characteristics and trends, strengths, weakness, and institutional goals projected out for the next five years. Copies of the *Scholastica Direction* are made available to all faculty and staff and are sent to all members of the Board of Trustees. The document is also used for accrediting bodies and for institutional advancement purposes.

The following diagram shows the President and Plenary Planning Commission as the hub of the strategic planning effort, with information coming from the marketing group and the vice-presidents. Goals are forwarded to the Long-Range Planning Committee and on to the Board of Trustees, for approval. The goals are then sent to all academic and administrative departments. Resource allocation gives substance to the planning effort by the Budget Committee, setting priorities for funding, based on the approved goals of the College.*

* This process is taken from *The Scholastica Direction: A Planning Document*, Volume Fifteen, 1995-1996, pages 3-6.

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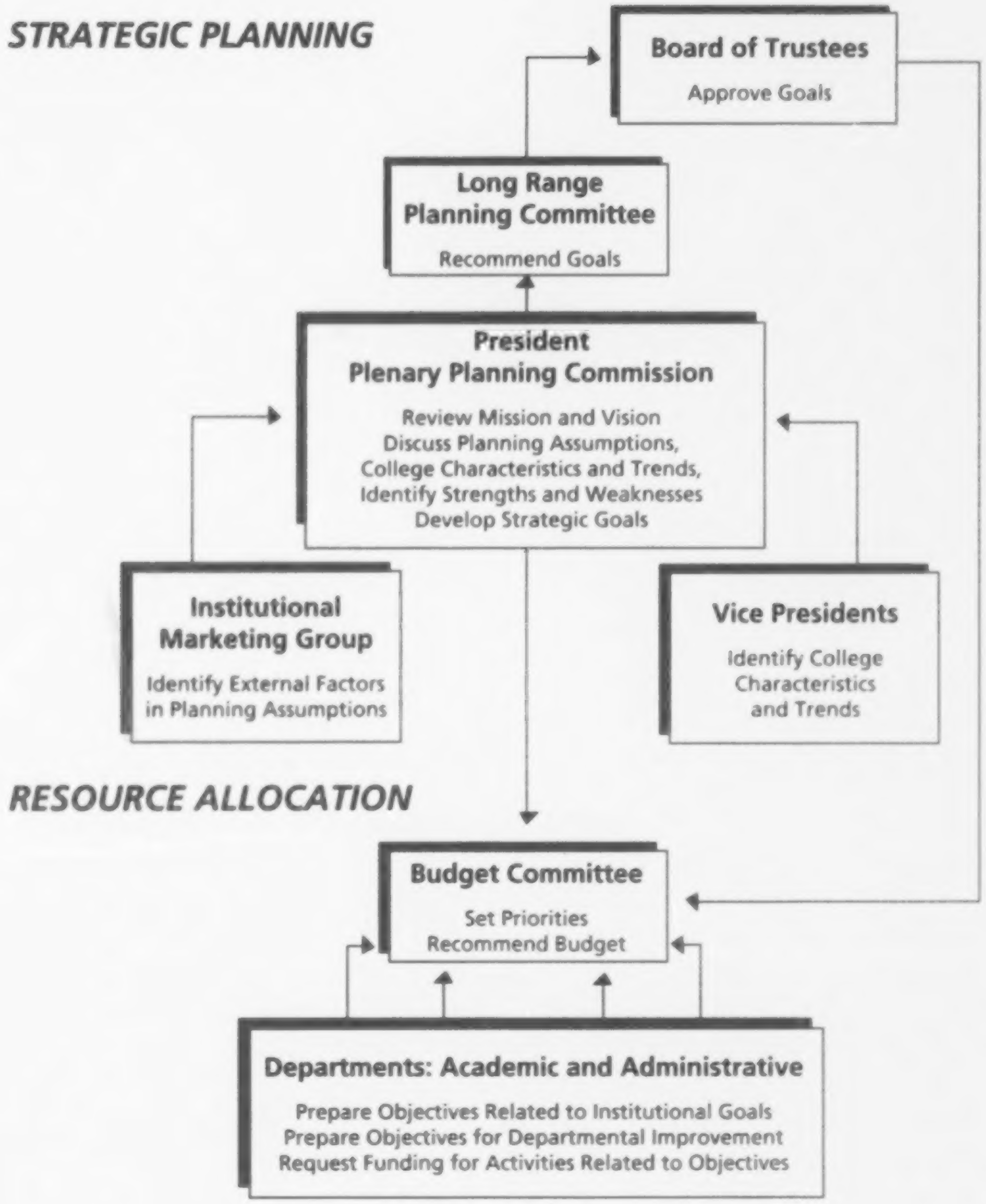
Appendix


STRATEGIC PLANNING
Board of Trustees
Approve Goals
Long Range Planning Committee
Recommend Goals
President
Plenary Planning Commission
Review Mission and Vision
Discuss Planning Assumptions,
College Characteristics and Trends,
Identify Strengths and Weaknesses
Develop Strategic Goals
Institutional Marketing Group
Identify External Factors in Planning Assumptions
Vice Presidents
Identify College Characteristics and Trends
RESOURCE ALLOCATION
Budget Committee
Set Priorities
Recommend Budget
Departments: Academic and Administrative
Prepare Objectives Related to Institutional Goals
Prepare Objectives for Departmental Improvement
Request Funding for Activities Related to Objectives

Cyclical Self-Assessment: Measuring, Monitoring, and Managing Strategic Planning

Marna Boyle
Peter M. Jonas
Don Weimer

Institutional effectiveness, assessment, continuous improvement, re-engineering, and strategic planning are practices that institutions of higher education, as well as regional accrediting associations, are focusing on for the 21st century. Pressed by a changing clientele, a transforming academic environment, enrollment uncertainties, limited resources, and an increasingly competitive market, schools must address these external forces in order to survive. Therefore, colleges must develop sound strategic planning processes while remaining mobile enough to adapt to a changing environment, to new requirements of accrediting associations, and to revisions in the planning process itself. Cyclical self-assessment can help in these endeavors by requiring individual departments to review their work in the context of strategic planning. Cardinal Stritch College utilizes cyclical self-assessment as a unifying component of its institutional effectiveness program.

Introduction

Colleges and universities are undergoing major changes in the way they view institutional effectiveness. Both the regional and specialized accrediting bodies now require that a formal outcomes assessment program be developed and implemented so that educational outcomes can be evaluated on a regular basis. Assessment must also be related to the mission, objectives, and goals of the institution and integrated with strategic planning and budgeting. More importantly, accrediting bodies require that assessment be used in a measurable and direct manner to improve institutional effectiveness. Institutional effectiveness is a broader concept than outcomes assessment, it involves the entire institution in an evaluation and improvement process. Easterling (1996) defines institutional effectiveness as the "process of articulating the mission of the college, setting goals emanating from that mission, defining how the college and the community will know when goals are being met, and using the data from assessment in an ongoing cycle of goal setting and planning. Putting it another way, effectiveness suggests that a college has a discernible mission, is producing outcomes that meet constituency needs, and can conclusively document the outcomes it is producing as a reflection of its mission."

Institutional effectiveness must be an integrated part of strategic planning. The systems approach to strategic planning links all of the various processes, ensuring that they are working in unison. In addition, an evaluation process is interrelated to provide feedback for continuous improvement. The systems approach to assessment in strategic planning starts with the mission of the college and works back to the classroom.

Cardinal Stritch College is a medium sized, liberal arts institution located in the Midwest. Stritch developed, revised, and now utilizes cyclical self-assessment to create a link among institutional planning, departmental planning, and assessment. Moreover, this assessment process is a guiding principle in the development of a cohesive plan for institutional effectiveness.

Institutional Effectiveness

In their text, *Assessing Institutional Effectiveness—Redirecting the Self-Study Process* (CAPHE, 1988), Ewell and Lisensky describe Jack Krakower's four domains of institutional effectiveness. These domains are goal achievement, organizational climate, management processes, and environmental adaptation. The goal achievement view of effectiveness concentrates on the "outputs" of an organization while the organizational climate perspective is directed at internal processes that define personal relationships within the organization. Management processes assess the effectiveness to which an organization develops specific procedures consistent with the mission and the degree these processes are used. Environmental adaptation reviews how well the organization and its constituents adapt to its actual and potential environment.

Cyclical Self-Assessment

Cyclical self-assessment is a process that allows strategic planning to operate at the departmental level. Every five years all academic departments and administrative offices, or strategic planning units (SPU), complete a detailed analysis, review, and assessment. Moreover, every year the department reviews these cyclical self-assessments in order to complete their operating budgets, submit new proposals, and to ensure alliance with the overall strategic plan of the institution. Cyclical self-assessment includes detailed statistical analyses of key success factors, a review of progress on goals, as well as ongoing assessment and results. It helps faculty and departments to focus on a learner-centered environment. The self-assessment also calls for an analysis of current resources to determine if they are adequate for the current levels of strategies and outcomes.

Cyclical self-assessment helps faculty chairs and administrators to examine the different roles of their departments in the context of other areas on campus. It also forces departments to work within the guidelines of the strategic plan while providing detailed cost-benefit analysis with any new initiatives. This information is shared with the centralized Planning Team or committee responsible for planning on campus for further refinement and updates of the strategic plan.

In too many instances, strategic planning is a system in name only, designed solely for the benefit of accrediting agencies. However, cyclical self-assessment helps place importance on planning while identifying outcomes for departments and the entire planning process.

Specific Elements of Cyclical Self-Assessment

Each academic and administrative unit undertakes a cyclical self-assessment in accordance with a project schedule. Guidelines for the process were developed by the faculty, and administration, and modeled after those proposed by Madan Capoor and Howard Simmons. Recently the form has been revised to reflect current trends and changes in both the internal and external environment.

Departments are required to relate their goals, and objectives to the institution's mission, goals, and objectives of their programs and services with focus upon processes, outcomes, and the use of resources to attain desired outcomes. The guidelines address: division context; history of the program; rationale of the program; faculty (quality of teaching); student data; program/curriculum objectives; program assessment (input, continuous quality improvement, and outcomes); adequacy and appropriateness of resources, processes, policies and support services; and conclusions or recommendations.

The cyclical self-assessment process is a team effort with all members of the department contributing to the report. In addition, the Director of Institutional Research assists by providing data and documents, such as enrollment data, academic background information, and department cost ratios. The Vice President of the academic or administrative offices monitors the process for their respective areas. Finally, the information from the cyclical self-assessment is integrated into the strategic planning process of the college.

Conclusion

In the end, the cyclical self-assessment includes a description of the departmental outcomes assessment program. The self-study also includes results from outcomes assessment and the interpretation of those results, as well as how the assessment results are used. By having every academic department and office on campus participate in this process, cyclical self-assessment not only assists in unifying strategic planning, but provides an avenue for accountability, authority, and information/communication. It is also an important element within the institution by connecting the four domains for a comprehensive program of institutional effectiveness.

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The Relationships Among Mission, Strategic Planning, and Trustee Recruitment

Ellen Doyle, O.S.U.

Introduction

Some institutions are more vulnerable than others to rapid change because of their size, location, image, or limited resources. However, this vulnerability can be an asset when it propels the college to address the impact of change with greater urgency. Chatfield College is one such college. A small, independent liberal arts college, Chatfield College has been accredited by the North Central Association since its founding in 1971. In its short history, it has survived times of rapid change because of steady leadership that has integrated mission, strategic planning, and trustee recruitment in the face of many threats, opportunities, and changes. Over the ten year period from 1986-1996 the following questions were asked (and answered) at the board level:

- Is the mission needed?
- Is the mission viable?
- Can a board be recruited to support the mission?
- How can the board develop and implement an integrated strategic plan to support the mission?

This paper discusses the interrelationships between the articulation of a clear and unique mission, the development of a strategic plan to support the mission, and the recruitment of trustees to both support the mission, and drive the strategic plan.

Mission

Any institution must continually evaluate its mission. It must be clear. It must respond to a real need in the community or market it serves. If its mission is unique or special in some way, that uniqueness must be known to its prospective students and supporters.

The mission of Chatfield College is to teach life skills via a liberal arts education to students who may not attend college if Chatfield didn't exist. They are low-income adults from rural Appalachian families where higher education is often viewed more as a threat than a resource. With increasing awareness of the importance of higher education and of Chatfield as a non-threatening, accessible college at which to begin, Chatfield's enrollment has steadily increased. The niche is unique. Authorized to award the Associate of Arts degree and to offer 300-level classes that transfer into a baccalaureate program, Chatfield offers small classes (average class size is eight) and significant personal support to capable students who grow in the self-esteem they need to be successful at other colleges; in community service; and in business, education, health, and human services. Chatfield shares part of the mission of the publicly-funded community colleges in the area. But as an independent college, it does not share in the same public resources nor is it constrained by the same policies and control. Chatfield is a tiny boat in a big sea, but it can change course quickly in the face of a storm.

In 1986, the Chatfield Board of Trustees chose a new president who assured the board in her interview process that she would not be afraid to close the college if that became necessary. The board leadership that year was asking hard questions about the ability of the college to survive change. A demographic analysis of the geographic area served by Chatfield convinced the board that the mission of this commuter college was needed and that the pool of prospective students in our target area was large enough for us to draw a student body of the size that would support the mission: not too big, not too small. A comparative study of the other colleges in the area made it clear that Chatfield's mission was unique. All through this process of data gathering and questioning, the option of closing the college, even though there was no immediate crisis of any kind, was a real choice. It takes courage to consider such a step under any circumstances, but those boards who can face such difficult choices before they are forced to are much more likely to generate viable alternatives. Steady, committed, and strong leadership is essential for such a process to be effective.

A clear, unique, and necessary mission is not necessarily fundable. This was the next hurdle to cross. Could this tiny, rural college attract the board leadership that in turn would attract the financial support needed to sustain it? How could Chatfield develop the strategic plan it needed to continue its mission? The relationship between mission, strategic planning, and trustee recruitment was emerging.

Strategic Planning

☐ Phase 1, 1987-92

In the absence of resources to hire external support for a strategic planning process, the President and the Board at Chatfield College worked collaboratively to develop a strategic direction for the five year period, 1987-92. Five measurable planning goals were identified. Three areas of board direction emerged as well, one of these being a board recruitment plan. During this period, steady leadership at both the board and administrative level enabled the college to successfully achieve each of the five goals and to develop a Board of Trustees that could lead the college into the future. The college continued to be vulnerable to rapid change though, with no endowment, no financial reserves, no institutional support for tuition assistance, and no capital budget. Tuition had increased during this period to a point where state and federal student aid would no longer cover the costs of attending college at Chatfield. The board realized that the mission would be jeopardized if tuition continued to rise. A new plan was needed.

☐ Phase 2, 1992-97

Under the leadership of a new trustee, chosen according to the board recruitment plan described later in this paper, the college worked to develop a new strategic plan. There were several crises during this period: attrition of key staff, a long vacancy in a key staff position, and a sudden and unexpected enrollment decline. The planning process went forward. Leadership at the board level remained strong. A new plan, with alignment between every component of the college, was developed. Everyone knew what the one goal and the five strategies were and how their particular effort influenced the outcome. Every outcome was measurable. Even with the threat of a significant deficit one year, the process continued, resulting in a significant surplus in the same fiscal year. The values that were articulated in the process guided decisions and sustained the fragile community through challenging times. The board, staff, faculty, and students all worked together during this process as a cohesive community. Every effort was focused on the mission. The resulting outcomes met or exceeded those called for in the plan.

Trustee Recruitment

Beginning in 1987, Trustee recruitment was driven by the strategic plan. Board and staff members surfaced profiles for new Trustees by reviewing where help was needed in implementing the plan. Being supportive of the mission was essential but not sufficient in a board prospect. Candidates were nominated based on their ability to deliver results. Each nominee was interviewed face-to-face by a Trustee and the President and learned about the mission of the college, its strategic plan, and the particular role that that individual was being called to play in furthering the college. In this interview Chatfield representatives were realistic about expected time commitments as well as convincing in their promise of satisfaction gained from the service given. Most importantly, candidates were given the opportunity to gracefully decline if they felt they could not fulfill what was being asked. Not one trustee was elected merely for his or her relationship with a current trustee or the

President. New trustees began service knowing much more than the dates of the meetings, a rare experience for many boards. Trustees became active immediately and did, in fact, contribute their time and expertise in a significant way. Their loyalty is to the institution, rather than to a colleague. Their motivation is related to the mission rather than their own prestige.

With this model for board recruitment in place, when the need for a new plan emerged in 1992, the college was now in a position to recruit a trustee candidate from a high level at a major Cincinnati corporation. Chatfield's location, one hour east of Cincinnati, in a poor, rural, undeveloped county, had been an obstacle in seeking the needed corporate and foundation support. To lay the groundwork for such support, Chatfield had decided to ask initially for trustee involvement from key corporations instead of financial support, so that those individuals could then pave the way for future financial support. The College needed a trustee to chair the Planning Committee, which would, in turn, develop a plan to help the College remain faithful to its mission in the face of decreasing financial aid and increasing costs. After presenting the profile to the corporation's CEO, the President and a board representative received the name of a candidate to consider. After interviewing and electing this person, Chatfield was on its way to a new strategic plan to respond to the latest challenge.

This model of trustee recruitment is extremely effective. Besides being recruited for Board membership, trustees are recruited for a specific committee, each of which has a specific role in relation to the strategic plan. When the committee structure needed to change to support the strategic plan in 1995, the board reorganized in one week. New committee assignments were made quickly and efficiently because the trustees knew each other well, all were active, and all had a role in the creation and implementation of the strategic plan. Responsiveness to change was collegial and non-political. The well-being of the college was the major criterion.

The College is now implementing and updating a strategic plan that has enabled Chatfield to keep tuition flat for four consecutive years. There is now the beginning of an endowment with our first bequest, and a capital budget is emerging. Even as leadership will now change, the college has processes in place to continue to strengthen its mission, to continue a strong planning process, and to attract trustees that can carry the college into the future.

Conclusion

This little college is still vulnerable. It will face continued challenges. But it is faithful to the mission, resourceful in planning and in community building, and possibly useful as a resource to other institutions who face the challenge of change.

Key elements in its success seem to be:

- resourcefulness and creativity
- openness to change
- clarity about the mission
- groundedness in the values
- freedom from political constraints
- alignment around a plan
- strong leadership

As the dialogue on the management of change continues, institutions of all sizes, types, and missions have something to contribute to each other that can enhance the effectiveness of higher education in general. Perhaps the experience of this small college can be of use in that dialogue.

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Use of Information Technology in Strategic Planning

Karen Schmid
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Introduction

One purpose of strategic planning is to engage the campus and larger community in thinking about and discussing the issues facing the college or university (Kieft, Armijo, & Bucklew, 1978). Especially in a larger institution, it is difficult to involve faculty, staff, and students in this discussion, or even to keep them adequately informed. Many may feel "out of the loop" or alienated from this important process. Indeed, Meredith (1993) found that only 54 percent of campus planners thought that "having good communication among the campus constituencies" worked for their institution.

One way to increase engagement is to make plentiful use of information technology to communicate about strategic planning. Computer mediated communication can lead to the development of a virtual community, which allows "people of like interests to come together with little cost, help[s] them exchange ideas and coordinate their activities, and provide[s] the kind of identification and feeling of membership found in face-to-face interaction" (Smith, 1995).

At St. Cloud State University, open and abundant communication about strategic planning and the development of community were especially important to overcome negative reactions to the notion of strategic planning because of historical reasons, to encourage ownership of the plan by faculty and staff, and to promote implementation of the plan. The Strategic Planning Committee (SPC), composed of faculty, staff, students, and administrators, used information technology to communicate frequently, quickly, and openly. Techniques included:

◇ communication from the SPC chair to committee members via e-mail;

◇ periodic e-mail updates sent by the chair of the SPC to all students, faculty, and staff e-mail accounts;

◇ a web environment with numerous sections, which is described in detail below;

◇ an opening convocation presentation, to which all faculty, staff, and students were invited, that included an electronic presentation of flow charts from the SPC web;

◇ open forums held several months into the strategic planning process that also included electronic presentations illustrating the campus planning process;

◇ an e-mail survey of information technology opportunities and threats sent to all students, faculty, and staff with e-mail accounts. The survey results were shared in brief format via e-mail and more extensively on the World Wide Web;

◇ e-mail dissemination of the heart of the proposed plan: goals, objectives, and vision statement;

◇ e-mail responses from students, faculty, and staff to the goals, objectives, and vision statement, which were shared with the SPC;

◇ extensive use of lap-tops at writing sessions, used to complete much of the actual writing of the plan; and

◇ e-mail distribution of the entire initial planning report to SPC members.

Web Environment

The SPC web environment is extensive, with many links. Because of skepticism about the concept of strategic planning, a great deal of information about the process was provided. The web environment includes:

- an overview of the strategic planning process
- diagrams of the planning process
- biographies of all committee members, along with their office and e-mail addresses and their phone numbers
- news and announcements
- a dialogue page that enabled readers to post their questions and responses
- the SPC response to our state board strategic plan
- strategic planning history and timeline
- membership and reports of working groups
- a reading list
- links to strategic plans of other universities
- minutes of all meetings
- results of surveys and other data
- drafts of sections of the plan
- the final plan with appendices

Costs and Culture

Extensive use of information technology entails costs. This approach took considerable time, effort, and expertise. We made use of committee members: the chair of the SPC teaches business computer information systems; committee staff were knowledgeable and comfortable in the use of information technology; one SPC member, who designed the web environment, is a campus leader in information technology (and the second author of this paper).

Of course, this approach will work only if most faculty, staff, and students have easy access to computers, e-mail accounts, and the World Wide Web. This has been a priority for our campus; most have the needed access. Support for and interest in information technology vary with campus culture. Information technology generally is seen as a positive, useful tool at SCSU.

Principles

To be inclusive we also shared much of the information and the surveys in the campus paper newsletter and requested responses by hard copy. However, nearly all responses were sent via e-mail. One principle of computer-mediated communication is ease of interaction (Vassiliou, 1984). For most faculty, staff, and students with e-mail software, responding is as easy as clicking a mouse. For others, a little knowledge of Unix commands is necessary.

A second principle of computer-mediated communication, which we followed for the most part, is to keep e-mail short. Because most people read e-mail on the computer screen rather than printing it out, cognitive load is a factor. That is, readers must remember the contents of a long message because it is more difficult to refer to previous passages than it is on paper. We shared longer documents such as the initial planning report on e-mail, because of the speed advantage of electronic communication, with the expectation that interested readers would print the documents.

We applied human factors design principles to the information structure, page or screen design, and navigation of web pages. We tried to structure information so it would be logical to users, who should always be able to answer the following questions: Where am I? What am I doing? What is available? Pages were designed to be attractive and consistent, and to avoid megapages, to keep cognitive load reasonable (Jonassen, 1988; Price, 1990). Pages and graphics were consciously designed using conservative colors and textures to be visually reassuring for those who were skeptical about strategic planning.

Navigation devices on each page were the point and click variety for ease of moving around. We also included a link on each page to send e-mail to the strategic planning committee. Electronic communication enabled the Committee to complete the initial planning report in a compressed timeframe.

Conclusion

The SPC developed six goals for the university. One of the goals is: Focus on achieving leadership in information technology applications in administration and instruction. The strategic planning process modeled the effective use of information technology as an aid to communication, community-building, and campus-wide planning.

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Planning and Learning in a Time of Rapid Change

Carol Scarafiotti
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> To accelerate the process of transformation in higher education, it is necessary to develop the 'pull' of a compelling vision of Information Age learning and fuse that pull with the enabling 'push' of technology. This provides a powerful new driver for change."
>
> Michael G. Dolence and Donald M. Norris, *Transforming Higher Education: A Vision for Learning in the 21st Century*

On one hand, the book, *Transforming Higher Education: A Vision for Learning in the 21st Century*, provides all of us in higher education with some thought-provoking ideas about the need for organizational transformation and capacity development that comes with the rapid changes associated with the information age. On the other hand, however, we in education know how very challenging it actually is to operationalize transformational theory into effective action. Consequently, it is our intent, in this paper, to describe the planning process that we use at Rio Salado College in our distance learning course development function. This process, based on Peter Senge's Learning Organization Theory embraces *learning as planning* and *planning as learning*, and encompasses Senge's five disciplines: Shared Vision, Personal Mastery, Mental Models, Systems Thinking, and Team Learning. In this paper we illustrate how each of the five disciplines plays an important role in the course development planning process and how this process has helped us more rapidly transform our distance learning function.

Background Information

Since 1978, Rio Salado College has been a major provider of distance delivered learning, distinguishing itself by the hallmarks of convenient access and service to students and faculty. Currently, most distance delivered courses are asynchronous in structure, providing students the ability to learn at times that they find personally convenient. Most courses also offer five enrollment periods each semester, which gives students options that fit almost any schedule. Finally, distance learning students have access to all student services, including advisement and counseling, tutoring, and registration by telephone or Internet.

In 1996, Rio Salado College experienced a 19 percent enrollment increase in its distance learning offerings. More than 7,000 students now enroll in 99 different courses, delivered into their homes or workplaces, in such modalities as print, mixed media (which includes video and/or audio tapes, and learning packets), and the Internet.

It is a goal at Rio Salado College to provide its adjunct faculty (who teach 99 percent of the distance learning courses) with a completely-developed set of distance learning materials, including a standardized instructional framework, course syllabus, calendars, and assessments. Consequently, course development is a critical function of the college, and planning for course development is a core process.

The Old Planning Process for Course Development

The contrast between the old and new planning processes helps to illustrate the concept of increased capacity development. The old planning process (in use prior to 1995) was a loosely designed sequence of events resulting in a product—a developed course. In the old process, the program administrator for distance learning would assess the need for new course development, assign a faculty member to the project, and provide some samples of existing distance learning courses. If the faculty member needed additional support, such as technical help, it was provided upon request. The old process lacked a common vision—a shared meaning—of what a course delivered at a distance should and would contain in the way of structure and instructional design. In the old process, there was no emphasis on increasing the developers' capacity for learning. The goal of course development was simply to develop a course. Furthermore, the old process did not include a formal evaluation of the process itself.

The New Planning Process

In early 1995, the College leadership set a strategic goal of expanding its use of technology in distance learning. We "pushed" our instructional vision to the next level, and as a result, needed a different planning process to help get us there. The new (current) planning process focuses not only on the product but also on learning as the outcome. The process emphasizes a team approach to the development of each course and, as its foundation, operationalizes the five disciplines of a "learning organization," explained in the following section.

Shared Vision

In the *Fifth Discipline Handbook*, Senge states that the purpose of the Shared Vision discipline is to build shared meaning within the organization. In our course development process, this meant that it was important for us to have support and "buy-in" from the entire College on the course development vision and that it was critical for those who would be involved in the process to actually define it (that is, to articulate its purpose and goals). Subsequently, those who developed the vision were asked to present it to key College committees, such as the President's cabinet, the Faculty Senate, and the Systems Committee, for further enhancement and "buy-in."

Personal Mastery

Senge explains the organizational discipline of Personal Mastery as "a willingness to invest what is necessary to create an environment that helps employees become high-quality contributors." As we developed our first set of courses to be delivered over the Internet, we experienced first-hand the need to commit resources to our faculty in order to raise their technological skills. Consequently, training is now a major consideration in our course development process. Before moving forward with a new project, we assess what type of training will be necessary for course developers and for those who will be teaching the courses that already have been developed.

Mental Models and Systems Thinking

Senge's concept of Mental Models focuses on the ability to surface our assumptions, our internal pictures of the world, and then to scrutinize them and to open them to the influence of others. Before our involvement in "learning organization" theory, we had never considered the impact of discussing our individual assumptions about the planning process. In fact, it seemed then that too much talk delayed action. Now, however, we find that paying attention to our underlying beliefs not only enables us to make sure that we are all talking "from the same page," but also means that we can actually take action more rapidly, because we do not have to do as much revision. To help us establish common mental models in our course development process, we established a teaching and learning roundtable. This group meets weekly to discuss instructional issues that directly affect course development.

Senge defines Systems Thinking as the discipline of thinking about, and the language for, describing and understanding the forces and interrelationships that shape the behavior of systems. At Rio Salado College we have found that working to meet our course development goals as an entire system, instead of as separate departments, enables us not only to *respond* to change, but also *to* change. Outcomes from the teaching and learning roundtable led to establishing a Systems Team, which operationalizes the course development process throughout the College. These groups enable us to learn as part of planning.

Team Learning

Senge explains Team Learning as "enhancing a team's capacity to think and act in new synergistic ways, with full coordination and a sense of unity." In our course development process, team learning is an ongoing challenge as faculty members attempt to balance creative and academic freedom with the parameters and best-practice guidelines of course development. In our new process, a faculty member (the content developer) is now a member of a team. The team also includes three liaisons. The *instructional liaison,* also a faculty member, assists the faculty content developer in interpreting and implementing the course development guidelines throughout the design of the course. The *technical liaison* helps the faculty member with issues, such as those associated with design for delivery on the Internet. The *operational liaison* keeps the whole process moving forward through various course development stages, such as editing, student piloting, testing, and printing.

Another view of team learning is that it is the learning that is encouraged both among the various course developers and from the other stages of course development. That is, the three liaisons work to help each new course developer learn from the experiences and products of current and previous developers. In fact, weekly meetings take place in which faculty share their experiences with other developers. Moreover, the liaisons make it a point to interact with the course editor and student pilot-testers in order to extract common good *and* problematic practices, which are then shared with other developers.

Conclusion

There is little doubt that this is a time of rapid change in higher education. At Rio Salado College, we are eager to pursue transformation and capacity development to meet the needs of our students, even as these needs change. It is clear to us now that our old planning processes "worked" only so long as we perceived *status quo* as the future. The old planning process neither enabled learning, nor enabled rapid change.

It is also clear that incorporating the disciplines of the Learning Organization in our processes has enabled us to change our culture's approach to planning. As a result, we are discussing the effectiveness of the new planning process in ongoing evaluation. What we are seeing is evidence that this process is understood by all employees, is ongoing, has widespread usefulness and applicability throughout the institution, enables learning and decision-making so that we can respond appropriately to anticipated and unanticipated challenges, and can be and is assessed.

We believe that a culture centered on *planning as learning* and *learning as planning* makes it possible even for a complex organization to respond to rapid change. In addition, this culture clearly meets North Central Association Criterion Four for accreditation: "The institution can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness."

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Improving Institutional Effectiveness

Stephen Jonas
Lori Zakel

Sinclair Community College (Dayton, Ohio) uses a model that links strategic planning and institutional effectiveness. The framework for this model is the College's *Vision Statement* and six *Core Indicators of Institutional Effectiveness*. In addition, the College uses the Strategic Planning Engine developed by Dolence and Norris (see Figure 1). Conceptually, the strategic planning engine links strategic decision-making with organizational Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

The *Vision Statement*, adopted by the College's Board of Trustees in March 1994, provides a focus for the Sinclair Quality Initiative and continuous improvement program.

Sinclair...Bridge to the Future

Before us lie uncharted worlds of opportunity.
Sinclair will be the bridge into that future, giving open access to opportunity,
intellectual challenge, and self-discovery for students with diverse needs.

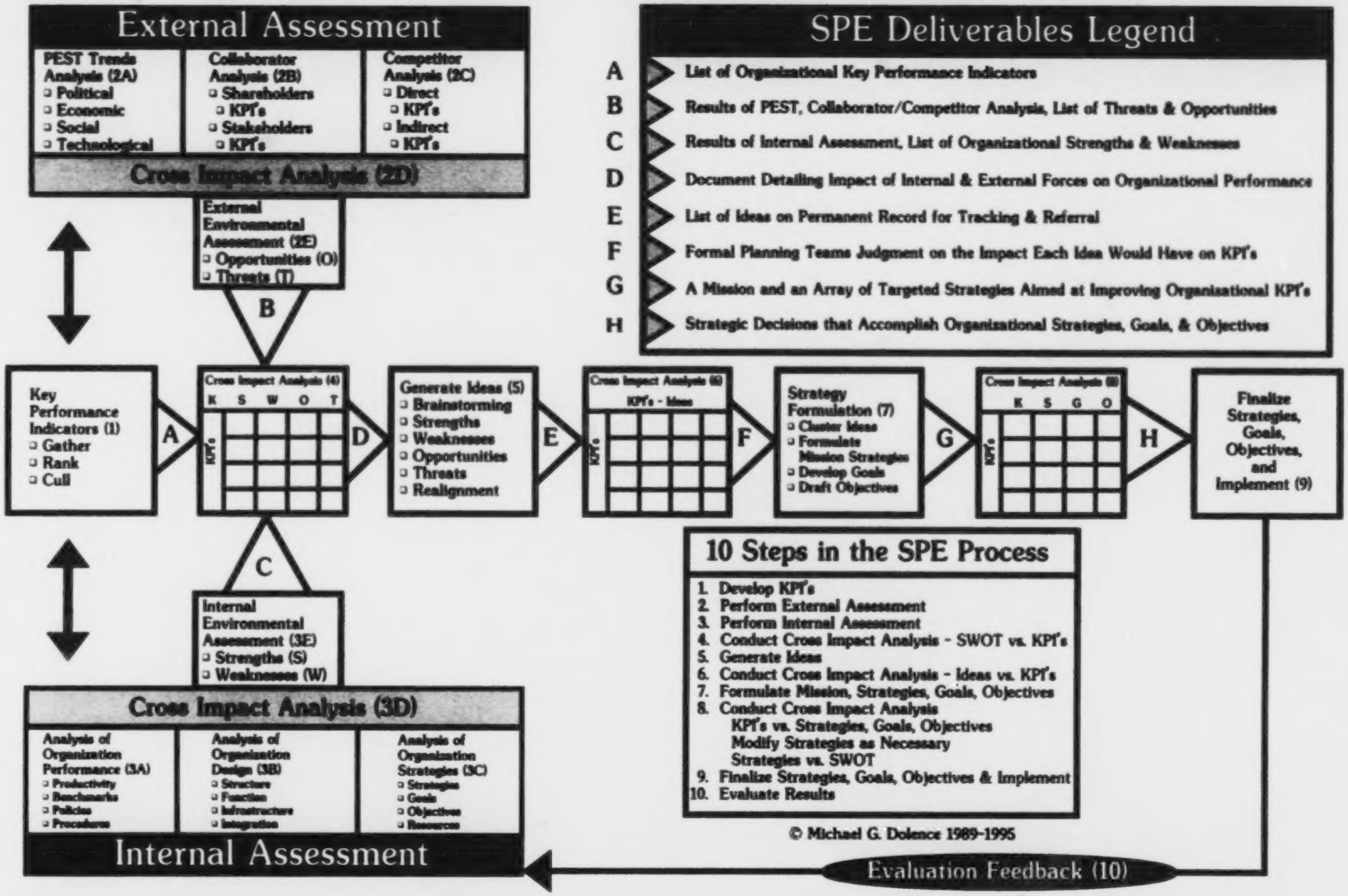
With Sinclair, people will pursue their quests for lifelong learning through affordable, high quality education. At Sinclair, people will benefit from a caring approach to teaching and learning that provides personal attention and encourages individual growth. Through Sinclair, people will be empowered with knowledge and skills for their journeys into tomorrow.

Our success shall hinge on turning these values into action:

dedication to quality and excellence;
reliance on anticipation, imagination, and innovation;
commitment to responsible citizenship within our community;
adherence to the Sinclair credo–"find the need and endeavor to meet it;"
confidence in the courage, determination, and diversity of our students,
employees, and supporters;
and
belief in unlimited human potential.

The *Institutional Effectiveness Model* and its six Core Indicators provide a framework for assessing how well the College is carrying out its mission and realizing its vision. In addition, the model provides the foundation for the development of strategic initiatives and decision-making.

Figure 1: The Strategic Planning Engine (SPE)


External Assessment
PEST Trends Analysis (2A)
Political
Economic
Social
Technological
Collaborator Analysis (2B)
Shareholders
KPI's
Stakeholders
KPI's
Competitor Analysis (2C)
Direct
KPI's
Indirect
KPI's
Cross Impact Analysis (2D)
External Environmental Assessment (2E)
Opportunities (O)
Threats (T)
B
Key Performance Indicators (1)
Gather
Rank
Cull
A
Cross Impact Analysis (4)
K S W O T
KPI's
D
Generate Ideas (5)
Brainstorming
Strengths
Weaknesses
Opportunities
Threats
Realignment
E
Cross Impact Analysis (6)
KPI's - Ideas
KPI's
F
Strategy Formulation (7)
Cluster Ideas
Formulate Mission Strategies
Develop Goals
Draft Objectives
G
Cross Impact Analysis (8)
K S G O
KPI's
H
Finalize Strategies, Goals, Objectives, and Implement (9)
C
Internal Environmental Assessment (3E)
Strengths (S)
Weaknesses (W)
Cross Impact Analysis (3D)
Analysis of Organization Performance (3A)
Productivity
Benchmarks
Policies
Procedures
Analysis of Organization Design (3B)
Structure
Function
Infrastructure
Integration
Analysis of Organization Strategies (3C)
Strategies
Goals
Objectives
Resources
Internal Assessment
Evaluation Feedback (10)

SPE Deliverables Legend

A ▶ List of Organizational Key Performance Indicators
B ▶ Results of PEST, Collaborator/Competitor Analysis, List of Threats & Opportunities
C ▶ Results of Internal Assessment, List of Organizational Strengths & Weaknesses
D ▶ Document Detailing Impact of Internal & External Forces on Organizational Performance
E ▶ List of Ideas on Permanent Record for Tracking & Referral
F ▶ Formal Planning Teams Judgment on the Impact Each Idea Would Have on KPI's
G ▶ A Mission and an Array of Targeted Strategies Aimed at Improving Organizational KPI's
H ▶ Strategic Decisions that Accomplish Organizational Strategies, Goals, & Objectives

10 Steps in the SPE Process

1. Develop KPI's
2. Perform External Assessment
3. Perform Internal Assessment
4. Conduct Cross Impact Analysis - SWOT vs. KPI's
5. Generate Ideas
6. Conduct Cross Impact Analysis - Ideas vs. KPI's
7. Formulate Mission, Strategies, Goals, Objectives
8. Conduct Cross Impact Analysis
    KPI's vs. Strategies, Goals, Objectives
    Modify Strategies as Necessary
    Strategies vs. SWOT
9. Finalize Strategies, Goals, Objectives & Implement
10. Evaluate Results

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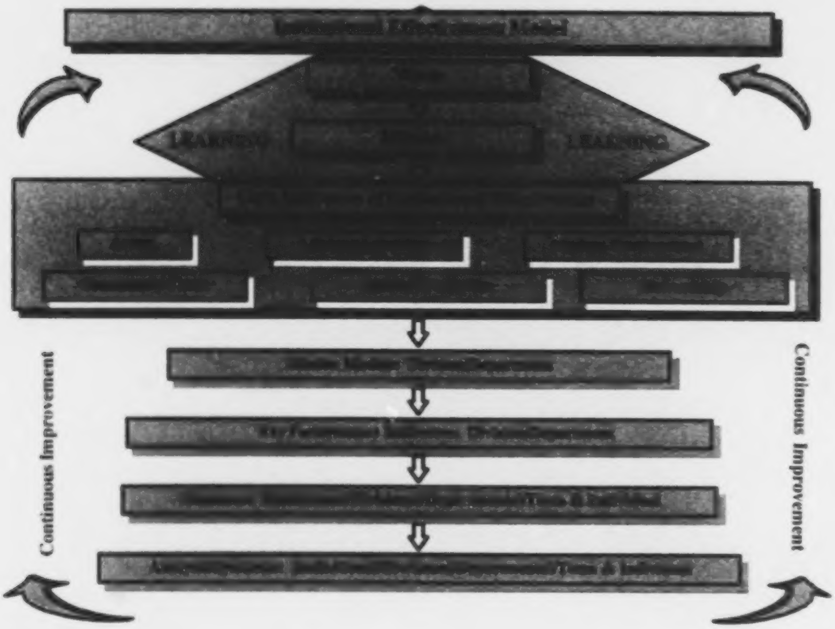

Figure 2
The Institutional Effectiveness Model

The six Core Indicators are:

- **Access to success.** Sinclair facilitates Access to Success for students to achieve their educational goals through participation in meaningful learning opportunities.
- **Lifelong learning.** Sinclair facilitates Lifelong Learning through learning opportunities that promote personal and professional growth throughout a lifetime.
- **Student development.** Sinclair facilitates Student Development inside and outside the classroom and supports development of the whole person.
- **Community focus.** Sinclair serves as a catalyst for regional cooperation and leadership.
- **Quality workplace.** Sinclair nurtures and supports a workforce and organizational structure dedicated to continuous improvement.
- **Stewardship.** Sinclair ensures institutional effectiveness through prudent use of College resources and dedication to continuous improvement.

Sinclair has identified an initial set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for each Core Indicator. KPIs assess the College's overall performance and assist in targeting areas for continuous improvement.

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The ten steps, identified by Dolence and Norris, involved in conducting the strategic planning process are shown below.

Ten Steps of the Strategic Planning Process

1. **Develop Key Performance Indicators**
2. **Perform an external environmental assessment (PEST analysis–political, economic, sociological, and technological trends and events; analysis of collaborators; analysis of competitors)**
3. **Perform an internal environmental assessment**
4. **Perform a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats)**
5. **Conduct brainstorming**
6. **Evaluate the potential impact of each idea on each SWOT**
7. **Formulate strategies, mission, goals, and objectives**
8. **Conduct a cross-impact analysis to determine the impact of proposed strategies, goals, and objectives on an organization's ability to achieve its key performance indicators (KPIs)**
9. **Finalize and implement strategies, goals, and objectives**
10. **Evaluate actual impact of strategies, goals, and objectives on organizational KPIs**

The self-study/strategic planning model implemented at Sinclair consisted of the following major phases of activity: background, evaluation, and strategic planning.

- In the **background phase,** College committees reviewed the previous self-study/long-range plan and strategic planning information; established the self-study/strategic planning agenda; determined critical performance areas; and, prepared an overview of current programs, services, and activities. In addition, the committees described accomplishments, issues, concerns, and new initiatives since the previous self-study and long-range plan.

- The **evaluation phase** consisted of aligning the critical performance areas with the Institutional Effectiveness Model and Core Indicators. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), based in part on the NCA Patterns of Evidence, were developed for each of the critical performance areas. A PEST analysis, that evaluated Political, Economic, Social, and Technological trends and events, was used to increase understanding of the impact of these factors on the College's health and to ensure alignment with significant factors in the environment. A SWOT analysis was conducted during this phase to assess the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats related to each critical performance area. A cross-impact analysis of the SWOTs and the KPIs was also used to measure the impact of each strength, weakness, opportunity and threat on each KPI. This information provided the basis for the self-study evaluation and well as the baseline information for the strategic plan.

- In the **planning phase** of the model, ideas were identified to enhance institutional effectiveness and to address the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats from the preceding phase. The ideas generated during this phase were evaluated against the KPIs using a cross-impact analysis. Finally, specific Strategic Planning Initiatives were formulated and processes defined to implement and monitor progress.

Strategic Planning Initiatives will serve as a blueprint for the next several years of institutional development and a guide for annual planning and budgeting. The Strategic Planning Initiatives will initially serve as the basis for the development of annual Continuous Improvement Targets for cross-functional teams and appropriate departments and divisions. The College is currently developing a process that will also link performance

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management to strategic planning initiatives. Strategic Planning Initiatives will be reviewed and evaluated on an annual basis in relationship to the Core Indicators of Effectiveness.

The Institutional Effectiveness Model and the Core Indicators of Effectiveness, combined with institution-wide self analysis, are core components of strategic planning at Sinclair Community College. The College's quest for institutional effectiveness will occur through systematic and systemic strategic planning efforts.

Key Elements and Definitions

Sinclair's Strategic Planning and Institutional Effectiveness Model

Key Elements	Definitions
Critical Performance Areas	Broad categories of information needed for evaluating the College's performance.
Core Indicators of Effectiveness	Key elements of the College's Vision and Mission that form the essential criteria for assessing overall performance. Six Core Indicators make up the Institutional Effectiveness Model: Access to Success, Lifelong Learning, Student Development, Community Focus, Quality Workplace, and Stewardship.
Key Performance Indicators	Specific measures of quality, quantity, time, or costs that tell how well the College is performing in relationship to each Core Indicator and Critical Performance Area.
SWOT Analysis	A technique for assessing the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of a Critical Performance Area. The analysis of strengths and weaknesses focuses on the internal environment (who and what the institution is); opportunities and threats focus on the external environment (critical opportunities and constraints that impact the progress or advancement of key performance indicators).
Cross-Impact Analysis	A technique for assessing the impact of external and internal environmental strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats on the College's ability to achieve its Key Performance Indicators.
Strategic Planning Initiatives	These initiatives serve to align the organization with the environment in which it must function. Initial ideas are generated through brainstorming to improve the College's performance, reduce the impact of threats and weaknesses, seize opportunities, and enhance strengths. Strategic Planning Initiatives are then developed using the ideas generated that have the potential for having the greatest impact on each KPI.

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Strategic Planning: A Change Management Process

Jane E. Hasek

Increasingly, strategic planning is viewed as a change process. Most institutions of higher education will face a number of challenging forces throughout the next several years, and Allen College is no different. Allen College has been blessed—strategic planning is an integral part of the growth and development of the institution. The college has utilized a strategic planning process both as a deliberate and emergent response to external and internal change and as an integral part of its ability to survive and prosper. The strategic planning process involved all constituents of the institution, including the governing board and community, and viewed the institution as a synergistic system.

Change

As higher education faces a time of rapid change, the questions arise: "How should we organize and plan for opportunities and challenges that may not fit neatly within our current structure?" "What strategies are needed to attain our vision for the future?" Strategic planning is viewed as a change process; however, very little real organizational change appears to be going on. This is the challenge of strategic planning. It is also important that an institution remain true to its overall mission; and effective strategic plans are mission driven.

Allen College, a small private institution that admitted its first students in 1990 and graduated its first baccalaureate students in 1994, now faces an expressed need to add academic programs while also responding to needs of the community. The focus of the college to this point had been first on providing high quality nursing education with its baccalaureate degree program in nursing along with associated continuing education programs and the promotion of scholarly endeavors and service to the community. The long-range plan included development of other undergraduate degrees and implementation of a master's degree. Strategic planning has always been an ongoing process that has assisted the institution's development while maintaining quality, integrity, and effectiveness.

In light of the enhanced speed of external and internal change and the desire to be an effective viable institution, the need for a new focus to strategic planning became apparent. This presentation will describe how Allen College utilized a strategic planning process as a deliberate and emergent response to major changes it was experiencing. The college's desire to be a premier educational institution that provides quality educational services and to create alliances that have a positive impact on the educational status of the individuals and communities it serves was the impetus for the strategic planning process.

Leadership

Leadership, dialogue, team building, internal and external involvement, and institution-wide communications were the primary elements of the process. The institution is viewed as an open system within which everything is connected, highly porous to its external environment, always changing, adaptive, interactive. The planning process strives to view the institution as a whole that is more than the sum of its parts—a synergistic system.

One key factor of leadership is to discern the patterns of change most likely to affect the institution and to develop a change management process. Understanding the driving forces of change and their implications for the future of the institution stresses the importance of vision and foresight. It is important to have widespread involvement, shared vision, and emerging faculty and staff leadership. A leader's role is to be certain that the institution remains true to its overall mission, especially in the face of change. All effective strategic plans are mission-driven.

Strategic Planning Process

Most institutions have a distinctive culture, so development of a strategic planning process must be appropriate to the individual institution. Allen College's Strategic Planning Process involved all aspects of the institution, including the governing board and community. This "quick start," or second phase, strategic planning process began in July 1996.

Board Resolution

The Board of Trustees recognized the changing forces and the need for a new initiative in the planning process. It passed a resolution that directed the Chancellor to engage the college leadership in a strategic planning process that addressed strategic priorities, not limited to but including the following:

- Quality education–institutional development
- Student satisfaction and student success
- Enrollment management
- Resource development: Financial viability and campus planning
- Strategic alliances

In development of the resolution, the Board of Trustees affirmed the vision, mission, philosophy, and core values of the college. It recognized that the college had incorporated, into its goals and objectives, strategic initiatives that are based on assumptions, key objectives, and strategic pathways. The Board stated that it wanted the college to develop premier health care programs. It stated that strategic planning is increasingly viewed as a change process, and there is a need for renewed interest in strategic planning as an interactive process where strategic issues, core competencies, and distinctive features are addressed.

The Board of Trustees provided a framework for the Allen's Strategic Planning Process by identifying key success factors, guiding principles, strategic priorities, and specific issues related to each priority. The leadership role was delineated, and a six-month time frame was identified for development of the Initial Institutional Plan.

Action Plan

The Action Plan utilized a collaborative process, incorporating internal and external assessment. Components of the process included the Resolution, college agenda, college forum, strategic planning steering committee, and the task forces. The process involved all constituencies of the college and community.

College Forum

A College Forum was held that brought all faculty, staff, and administrators together for a retreat. They took information developed at previous planning retreats and the Resolution and framework provided by the Board of Trustees and, through a strategic planning process, identified priorities and issues they felt needed to be addressed.

Strategic Planning Committee

A Strategic Planning Steering Committee was appointed by the Chancellor with the addition of a faculty representative selected by the faculty. Committee membership represented faculty, staff, and administration, as well as all divisions of the college. The Steering Committee identified the Task Forces to be established and identified individuals with a broad based representation who would be effective members. The Strategic Planning Committee met periodically to oversee the activities of the Task Forces and provide communication. They identified areas of overlap and recognized the need for cooperation and coordination. Task force reports and minutes were distributed to all members of the Steering Committee. The Chair of the Steering Committee combined the results of the task forces and used them to draft the Initial Institutional Plan.

Task Forces

Five Task Forces were established based on the major priorities identified:

- ◇ Institutional development
- ◇ Enrollment management
- ◇ Financial capability
- ◇ Campus resources
- ◇ System and strategic alliances

Task Force members represent various constituencies, including faculty, staff, alumni, affiliating agencies, community constituents, Board of Trustees, academic leaders, and resource individuals from cooperative institutions. Each task force met two to three times to identify components of the plan, such as: strategies, operational plans, goals, objectives, and outcome measurements.

Benchmarking

A quality management technique, known as "benchmarking," was used to identify "best practices" and adapt the knowledge gained to improve performance. Benchmarking was utilized in demographic areas, enrollment management, and financial profiles. The College identified approximately ten institutions with similar situations for comparison.

Initial Institutional Plan

A draft of the Initial Institutional Plan was presented to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee members for their review and suggestions. Appropriate revisions were made, and then it was presented to the Board of Trustees for review. The Institutional Plan includes strategies, operational plans, goals, objectives, and outcome measurements. After the Plan was approved by the faculty, administration, and Board of Trustees, it was, and continues to be, presented to collective audiences of Task Force members, students, community leaders, and affiliating and coordinating institutions. The Strategic Plan was presented in a written report; dissemination was and is done in campus meetings, forums, and community meetings. The written report provides an excellent communication tool for demonstrating the Allen College Agenda.

Summary

The Strategic Planning Process and Plan have been an integral part of the self-study process, and all the components and reports have been incorporated into the self-study development. The faculty, staff, and administrators, as well as community members were eager to serve and interested in the process. Allen College is fortunate to have an effective planning tradition. Planning resides in hearts and minds of the trustee, administrative, and faculty leadership of the College. Change is viewed as an opportunity for institutional improvement. The action plan may change but strategic planning must be a continual integrated process.

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Chapter VII

Issues of Institutional Integrity

Measuring Moving Targets…◆…◆…◆

102nd Annual Meeting of the North Central Association
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
April 19-22, 1997 • Hyatt Regency Chicago

The Importance of Institutional Values in Times of Turbulence and Rapid Change

Joyce M. Jackson
Joe Ochap
Julie F. Smith

Estrella Mountain Community College (EMCC) is the tenth and newest college in the Maricopa Community College District (MCCD), which serves Maricopa County, including the greater metropolitan area of Phoenix, Arizona. EMCC, established in 1988, is located in southwestern Maricopa County in an area poised for rapid growth over the next 20 years.

The college was the last of three Maricopa colleges established under an educational center model. The model allowed EMCC to share NCA accreditation with Glendale Community College, a well-established Maricopa college. In 1996, the college had developed sufficiently to apply for its own separate, initial accreditation.

In November 1996, EMCC was recommended for initial accreditation after an evaluation team visit. In March 1997, the college was granted initial accreditation by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

Background

Since the inception of the college, planning has been an ongoing, integral part of organizational life. Interaction with both internal constituents and external publics has marked all stages of development at the college. Internal and external participatory processes have established connections among students, faculty, staff, and community members, providing the opportunity for them to become involved in the progress of the college. This continuing dialog has built a vital commitment on the part of the internal and external community to the development of the college. These efforts laid the groundwork for the institutional self-study.

Institutional Self-Study Structure

The formal institutional self-study process at EMCC began with a call for leadership volunteers from the college Provost. In response to this call for participation, two faculty members were identified as co-coordinators of the institutional self-study. A ten-member Executive Team consisting of co-coordinators, senior management, and administrative staff support was formed.

Once the Executive Team had conceptualized the necessary processes, set the guiding principles, designed the structure of the institutional self-study, and drafted a formal plan, it then solicited membership for the Institutional Self-Study Steering Committee. This resulted in a comprehensive team of 21 members, including Executive Team members, which represented all employee groups and major divisions within the college.

Four Criterion Teams focused on the five Criteria for Accreditation established by the NCA. Criteria One and Four were combined; one team was assigned to evaluate mission, purposes, and planning. The Criterion Two Team evaluated resources. Educational purposes were the focus of the Criterion Three Team, and the Criterion Five Team evaluated integrity at Estrella Mountain. A campus-wide all-employee meeting was held early in the process, which provided Criterion Team Leaders the opportunity to explain the institutional self-study process and solicit additional volunteers for their teams.

Throughout the institutional self-study, the Criterion Five Team met regularly to examine and analyze the various implications and interrelationships of the patterns of evidence pertaining to the integrity criterion.

Criterion Five Team Investigates Institutional Integrity

The Criterion Five Team took a three-pronged approach in its evaluation, focusing on these major issues:

- ◇ institutional values
- ◇ policies, procedures, and public communication
- ◇ diversity, equity, and access

During this evaluation process, the team developed the following working definition of integrity:

> Integrity is the adherence to a code of values. Estrella Mountain Community College Center employees demonstrate integrity by supporting the Estrella Mountain Institutional Values. In addition, College matters are conducted in a honest, ethical and straightforward manner.

The Criterion Five Team confirmed that EMCC is committed to the highest standards of integrity in its policies, practices and relationships.

☐ Institutional Values Form the Core

The establishment of a core of Institutional Values in 1994 guided the development of the college vision, mission, and purposes. These values proved pivotal to the investigation of integrity at EMCC.

The following are the Estrella Mountain Community College Institutional Values.

We believe that Estrella Mountain Community College:

1. Values and Respects All Students and Employees in a Caring and Supportive Environment
2. Provides all Students with the Opportunity to Learn
3. Commits to Continuous Improvement
4. Values Collaboration and Teamwork
5. Encourages Innovation
6. Responds to the Needs of the External and Internal Customer
7. Uses a Wide Range of Instructional Methods
8. Promotes Problem Solving Skills
9. Uses Current Technologies for Instruction and Support Services
10. Serves as an Active and Responsible Force for Change Within the Community
11. Is Committed to Collaborative Strategic Planning
12. Builds Partnerships and Linkages
13. Promotes Life-long Learning as a Goal for all Students, Faculty, and Staff
14. Respects Individual Differences and Promotes Cross Cultural Understanding
15. Creates and Maintains a Student-Centered Environment

The Criterion Five Team, through surveys and focus groups, reexamined and confirmed these values and studied their perceived alignment to everyday life at EMCC.

☐ Policies, Practices, and Public Communication

The review and analysis of Estrella Mountain publicly-stated policies and procedures revealed that the college benefits from being part of the larger Maricopa system. Estrella Mountain developed within the context of a larger, more experienced organization, the Maricopa Community College District, which is well-versed in conducting business by the high ethical standards required of such institutions.

The Criterion Five Team examined the policies and procedures governing all Maricopa colleges and then focused on additional documentation specific to Estrella Mountain. Again, the team confirmed that throughout college publications and policies and in its relationships with academic and community partners, the Institutional Values were expressed and actualized.

☐ Diversity, Equity, and Access

In order to assess employee perceptions of the EMCC commitment to diversity, as well as the degree to which this commitment is demonstrated, the Criterion Five Team created a diversity sub-team, which worked to evaluate the issues. The Diversity Team crafted a campus-wide working definition of diversity that was formally adopted by EMCC in June 1996:

> Diversity is acknowledging and respecting similarities and differences in culture, backgrounds and identity. The Estrella Mountain community encourages unique perspectives and values.

Employees perceive EMCC as a diverse workplace and have committed to building a teaching and learning environment that supports differences in ideas, viewpoints, perspectives, and values. The Criterion Five Team concluded that the college assures access to and equitable treatment of students through recruiting processes designed to meet the diverse needs within its community. EMCC has proactively taken serious measures to recruit students from population groups that have historically been ignored by many educational institutions. Identified target markets allow the college to achieve a better understanding of students' needs at the point of entry into college.

Conclusion

With most institutions of higher education facing the need to constantly change and adapt to external conditions, it becomes even more imperative that these organizations establish and articulate a common set of institutional values. Participatory processes that encourage internal constituents and external publics to know and examine these values provide a means for exploring what is driving behavior and establishing relationships within the day-to-day operations of a college. These values provide a yardstick to measure the everyday actions of the college and its impact on the larger environment of the community. In addition to shaping the organizational climate, the establishment of this common ground of values has the power to direct college communication strategies with external publics, as well as influence the overall student experience.

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From Policy to Action: Parkland College's Implementation of North Central's Statement on Access, Equity, and Diversity

Zelema M. Harris
Pauline E. Kayes

In 1991, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools issued a Statement on Access, Equity, and Diversity, in which the following policy was adopted:

> The effectiveness of institutional policies and practices relating to equity of treatment of individuals, nondiscrimination, affirmative action, and other means of enhancing access to education and the building of a diverse educational community will be evaluated.

In essence, every institution accredited by North Central will now be evaluated on its effectiveness at creating and maintaining "a teaching and learning environment that supports sensitivity to diverse individuals and groups."

North Central's strong stand did not originate in a vacuum. The governing body was well aware of the dramatic shift in our nation's racial, gender, and ethnic makeup.

Consider this:

- ◇ *Workforce 2000*, a 1987 Hudson Institute report commissioned by the US Department of Labor, predicted that 85 percent of new workers entering the workforce by the year 2000 will be women, immigrants, and minorities (African-Americans, Asians, and Latinos).
- ◇ White males, who had constituted 47 percent of new workers, will make up only 15 percent of new workers in the year 2000.
- ◇ In 1993, the Census Bureau confirmed the *Workforce 2000* predictions and projected that by the year 2010, for example, Hispanics will replace African-Americans as the nation's largest minority group.
- ◇ By the year 2000, the population of African American students in community colleges will increase by 12 percent, Latino by 21 percent, and Asian by 22 percent.

We already are seeing these demographic changes in our schools and colleges, as the following data attest:

- ◇ Minority enrollment at community colleges in Illinois increased by 58 percent from 1993 to 1996 (according to the Illinois Community College Board)
- ◇ In our institution, Parkland College, the number of African American students enrolling has increased more than 73 percent since 1988.
- ◇ In 1990, Parkland's total minority student population was approximately 14 percent; in 1996, that percentage rose to nearly 20 percent.

Policies such as North Central's Statement on Access, Equity, and Diversity help ensure that our educational institutions remain vital and relevant by adapting to the changing society evidenced by these demographics. What is interesting to note is that many of our institutions have diversity resolutions and policies "on the books."

Fewer, however, have actual long-term plans to convert policy into action. It is not difficult to understand why. In order to fulfill North Central's requirements on access, equity, and cultural diversity, most institutions will be faced with engaging their faculty, staff, and students in a process of fundamental change.

Change of this magnitude does not come easily. As author James Baldwin once observed, "Any real change implies the breakup of the world as one has always known it, the loss of all that gave one an identity, the end of safety."

Most of us teaching and administering higher education institutions today are white, Anglo, and Eurocentric; that is, we have developed our learning approaches from educational theories based on the experiences of white, middle-to-upper class male students. Perhaps that explains why so many of our educational institutions expect our culturally diverse students to assimilate into the dominant educational culture. This popular paradigm, of inculcating minority students in the characteristics and behaviors that lead majority students to academic success, often results in failure. To add insult to injury, we blame our minority students for their own failure. Consider the educational jargon applied to many diverse and minority students: phrases such as "culturally-deprived," "educationally-deficient," "at-risk," "learning-disabled," and "socially maladaptive."

This common theory that there is something wrong with minority students rather than with our institutions prevents us from focusing on how the institutional climate can discourage the academic achievement of minority students. It also prevents us from understanding why many of our efforts on behalf of minority students simply are not working. While our intentions are good, our efforts often are piecemeal; that is, we make attempts here and there to improve academic advising or support services or student orientation to respond to the needs of minority students. But these piecemeal efforts are too often disconnected from one another, and from the school or college itself. Therefore, they cannot adequately address the much more complex and deeply-rooted challenge of creating an inclusive, pluralistic educational culture across the entire institution.

Another reason our well-intentioned efforts fail is that we create special programs for diverse and minority students, yet keep these programs on the fringes of our colleges. Thus, whatever positive results emerge from the programs, they are too isolated to transform the whole institution. In addition, the underlying assumption of most of these special programs is that what minority students need to succeed is help in adjusting, adapting, and assimilating to the dominant campus culture. This assumption of mainstreaming puts the responsibility for change squarely on the shoulders of diverse and minority students, while leaving our schools and colleges unaccountable and unchanged. Furthermore, it ignores the fact that we no longer live in the "melting pot" world of the '60s, where everyone gladly erased their cultural and ethnic identities in order to become "Americanized." Today there is a greater desire to maintain one's own cultural integrity while working with others to create an American society that reflects our cultural differences, as well as our commonalities.

The eminent multiculturalist, Professor James Banks of the University of Washington, characterizes the educational environment as a social system, with norms, values, expectations, structures, and statuses. For us to create inclusive educational communities, we must gain a better understanding of how our schools and colleges serve as social systems for students of color and women students. These social systems can either be inclusive and empowering or exclusionary and alienating.

Using Banks' school-as-a-social system theory as our foundation, we have taken specific actions at Parkland to respond as an institution to North Central's statement on access, equity, and cultural diversity. In 1992, President Zelema Harris appointed a college-wide Committee on Access, Equity, and Cultural Diversity. The Committee meets regularly to assess and to evaluate Parkland's progress in achieving diversity goals and objectives, to make long-term recommendations, and to develop an annual action plan.

The Committee's achievements are distinctive. It was instrumental in having a Cultural Diversity resolution passed in 1993 by the Parkland Board of Trustees. The Committee also organized the first statewide conference on making gender-balanced, multicultural education a reality in Illinois schools. More than 500 educators attended and heard the "giants" of multicultural education, including Professor James Banks and Drs. Myra and David Sadker. Listing the Committee's accomplishments does not adequately convey what is happening at Parkland because of the Committee's efforts. What is difficult to explain or measure is the impact of the Committee on the hearts and minds of those who work and study at Parkland.

How do you explain the fundamental change in a white, male faculty member who has taught at Parkland for nearly a quarter of a century? He believed as sincerely as anyone can believe that he was a good, caring teacher—a credit to his college and his profession. Yet during the 25 years of his proud career, his students changed. Into his classroom they brought experiences, values, and a view of life that were unfamiliar to him. He had created a "package" of education that, in effect, told his students: "This is what you need to learn and this is the way you need to learn it—because it is the way I learned it and it is all I know." This well-intended man who loved teaching did not recognize how he was alienating many of his students of color and women students.

The Hispanic-American writer, Arturo Madrid, has written about his own feelings of "otherness" when he was in school: Madrid never saw himself reflected in what he was taught and his cultural voice was never acknowledged or listened to, in effect, silencing him and relegating him to the margins of the classroom and the school. At some point the professor started to listen to the diverse voices of his women students and students of color. He changed his content and his pedagogy. Now culturally diverse and minority students specifically request this professor's class because they know they will not be the "other" in his classroom, but will be included and central in the learning process.

No one was more surprised by his transformation than the professor himself. More than likely, the change never would have occurred had it not been for the cultural diversity education workshops offered to all Parkland employees. The professor attended, spoke out, resisted, became angry, resisted some more, and, at some random moment, transformed. At some unexpected time, this white, male, middle-aged professor saw the learning community he had helped to create and perpetuate through the eyes of his culturally-diverse students. He felt their loss.

The real-life example of the professor epitomizes the fact that without faculty development, our institutions will not change. In order to make policies such as North Central's Statement on Access, Equity, and Diversity truly come alive, faculty must become engaged, informed, and fully involved.

Imagine if an entire college transformed itself the way this middle-aged white male professor did…

- ◇ In what ways would the curriculum be different?
- ◇ How would teaching methods and learning styles change?
- ◇ What kinds of student activities would be available?
- ◇ How would assessment and testing be conducted?
- ◇ What images and artifacts would be displayed throughout the institution?
- ◇ How would the attitudes of students, faculty, and staff be different?
- ◇ What change would there be in the entire institutional climate?

The first step for educators is to create a vision of what we want our institutions to be. Then we must turn our vision into action. Only then will we successfully implement North Central's Statement on Access, Equity, and Diversity.

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Graduation Guarantees: Contracting for Success or Failure?

Burton O. Witthuhn
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The public, and particularly its representatives of legislative action, are seeking better performance outcomes from higher education. Although strongly committed to maintaining access to opportunity, increasingly the cost of the education and the time needed to complete the requirements are being challenged. These and other forces of change have recently been articulated in a *Policy Perspective* supported by the Ford Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, and the Pew Charitable Trust (November 1996, Vol. 7:1). An accommodation that addresses these concerns is a new phenomenon of guaranteed program delivery. Guarantees attempt to address issues and concerns including cost of a college education, articulation of coursework, time to degree, and competency. These guarantees typically are designed to promote retention and efficient tracking of students. Also, these guarantees specify student responsibility with a promise of free or fixed tuition if the university fails to provide the courses of the agreed to degree plan.

A satisfied public is not going to find advantage in the pronouncement of guarantees that have little real value. Guarantees that are designed simply as marketing devices will soon be discounted by customers looking for performance rather than "pomp and circumstance." Does one buy a new car simply for its style or rather for its guarantee of service?

Is it not reasonable for college enrollees to inquire how long it will take to satisfy the requirements? Or, "What will my education cost?" Or, "Are there any responsibilities that I must fulfill to satisfy the requirements of the program I plan to select?" Or, "Can a guarantee improve my chance of program completion?" In a learning environment where the customer is taken for granted perhaps too little attention is placed on answering such questions. However, we live in a time where the importance of customer satisfaction has become uppermost. At the same time, we are increasingly attracted to outcomes that are proven to be guaranteed by the provider of a service or product.

Colleges and universities have long specified expectations for a required grade point average, a minimum number of credit hours of study, and specified course categories or course content as answers to such questions. In the past, colleges and universities were not too concerned about total costs, or how long it would take to graduate, since students were seen as consumers of courses rather than of programs. The evidence also is persuasive in demonstrating higher education's lack of concern for persons who drop out of school. Indeed, how many persons reading this essay have ever heard a professor say, "Look around, one of three of you will survive to graduation."? Quality was measured by the elimination of the less successful rather than by measures of successful degree completions.

It is in this context of consumer concern that guarantees were born. Additionally, graduation guarantees appear to address a public rather than a private university problem, as evidenced by data showing that 95 percent of private college students finish their degrees in four years, compared to the fewer than 50 percent of public university students who do so. Clearly, faculty, advisors, and administrators at public institutions need to identify innovative strategies for attempting to address the enormous gap in four-year graduation rates. At first glance, guarantees appear to be one such attempt at increasing the percentage of students at public universities who finish a degree within four years.

While still a relatively new phenomenon, guarantees are raising concerns for many educators. At the 1996 National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) Conference held in Washington D.C., six panelists, all former NACADA presidents, discussed the feasibility and applicability of graduation guarantees at public and private collegiate institutions. A number of concerns were raised about the rationale behind graduation guarantees. The tone of the questions clearly placed these concerns on the side of the provider rather than of the consumer. For example:

- ◇ Why are colleges and universities developing graduation guarantees?
- ◇ Are these programs necessary?
- ◇ Are these programs fair?
- ◇ Are all students eligible to participate?
- ◇ Do guarantees allow students to engage in extracurricular activities?

Depending on one's viewpoint or perspective, the generally negative response of the panelists seemed to emphasize the viewpoint that guarantees were nothing more than a recruitment or marketing tool and should be scrutinized from that perspective. Are questions of institutional integrity, program quality, and honesty of advertisement being raised by these guarantees? Some persons spoke to the seeming preferential treatment being suggested for participants capable of taking advantage of the guarantee. Concern was expressed that part-time students, transfer students, or students with weak entry skills would be excluded from participation. Given the NACADA audience, it is not surprising that advisors saw the guarantees from a viewpoint of advisor accountability in helping students succeed, while faculty and others were seen as being held less accountable for ensuring avoidance of the need of fulfilling a given guarantee. The panelists argued that graduation guarantees would have serious implications for general education requirements, would place an overemphasis on introductory courses, would impose restrictions on faculty advising, and would have potential legal implications.

Despite the number of criticisms made by the NACADA panelists concerning the feasibility of graduation guarantees, one cannot so easily conclude that guarantees are without merit. A visit to the Internet on the World Wide Web shows that universities across the nation are taking steps to develop and adopt graduation guarantees. Indiana University at Bloomington has developed a program referred to as "GRADPACT," which promises to pay tuition for additional semesters if students are unable to finish their undergraduate degree in four years. The Iowa Board of Regents mandated in 1995 that all major institutions in the state should adopt graduation guarantees that promote four-year degree completions for college students. The University of Northern Iowa reported that 52 percent of incoming students signed up for the guarantee last year. Other schools, such as Moorhead State University, Wittenberg University, University of the Pacific, and Winona State University, also have developed four-year graduation plans. While it is true that schools have developed guarantee programs in response to pressures from state legislators, parents, and taxpayers, and that these programs do serve as an effective marketing and recruitment strategy, these institutions also believe they are helping meet the demands of students who want to finish their degree within a four-year time span. Given the current public scrutiny of public institutional success, the guarantee phenomenon needs to be particularly directed toward this educational sector. The adoption and successful implementation of four-year graduation guarantees may be one of the first innovative solutions to allow public institutions of higher education to attempt to accomplish this important goal.

Graduation guarantees *are* important, because they are an integral aspect of timely degree completion. Students who linger in college, for six, seven, eight, or possibly even more years, are denying themselves employment or career opportunities that could improve their lifestyles substantially. Legislatures in some states, such as California, Florida, North Carolina, and Utah, have passed legislation that requires college students to pay the full rate of tuition once they have completed a designated number of credit hours beyond those required for graduation. If a college requires students to complete 120 semester hours to graduate, for example, that school may begin charging its students the full rate of tuition once they have earned more than 140-150 hours, to discourage them from spending additional time in college. Although similar initiatives have been proposed in states such as Colorado, they have been met in the legislatures with harsh criticisms from college officials who believe that such initiatives will discourage students from attending state schools (Gorman, 1996, A27).

While it is true that a four-year graduation guarantee is not for every student, one need only recognize that the same is true for university honors programs that restrict membership because of academic or grade point requirements. One would not argue that we should eliminate the honors program simply because some students are not eligible to participate in it. In reality, this is what makes the honors program experience unique or special—it is only for students with good academic records or experience. Even organizations such as the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) restrict the number of semesters of eligibility for student athletes. In a similar vein, one can make the case that graduation guarantees are only for those students who are committed to finishing their undergraduate degrees in four years or less.

For guarantees to work effectively, students must be fully informed before signing a contract of expectations and responsibilities in terms of a guarantee. The higher education institution must be fully aware of the potential implications of a guarantee delivery, such as providing courses, curriculum requirements, issues of advising, etc. Universities also must have in place a tracking mechanism that provides for dealing with the extra parameters that define the guarantee student at each stage of the degree program. Clarity of purpose also is necessary. The philosophical belief of the guarantee must be more than just a simple marketing tool—it must be able to meet and accommodate the needs and provide specific advantage to students choosing to be part of a guarantee plan.

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A Comprehensive Plan for Assessing and Evaluating Integrity

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Introduction

The institution demonstrates integrity in its practices and relationships" – that is the charge of the North Central Association's (NCA) accreditation Criterion Five. The *Handbook on Accreditation (1994 - 96)* elaborates on this by defining integrity, in general terms, "that an institution adheres both to the civil laws and the codes of ethics commonly accepted by the academic community" while acknowledging that "the institution's history, traditions and mission may shape its particular policies and traditions."

To assess integrity at Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, the College's North Central Reaccreditation Steering Committee appointed a working group that began its task by reviewing the Commission on Higher Education's definition as well as dictionary definitions of integrity. The latter added dimensions that were not part of the NCA definition, especially the concept of "adherence to a code of moral or professional standards of conduct." The Working Group on Integrity's operational definition of integrity included dimensions of both definitions: adherence to civil laws, to codes of ethics that inhere in the academic community, and to moral and professional standards of conduct that are specific to the professional organizations that guide the activities of professionals within the college.

In its search for patterns of evidence, the Working Group on Integrity organized its activities into five areas: college publications; internal policies and practices; contracts and relations with other educational institutions and programs; government and corporate contracts; and copyright issues in print, computing, and other media. Other working groups addressed additional integrity issues: the Personnel Working Group examined human resources policies, performance evaluations, confidentiality of records, and grievance procedures; and the Governance Working Group assessed faculty governance and grievance procedures.

The comprehensive nature of the assessment process is evident in the description of the task areas of the Working Group on Integrity.

Assessing Integrity by Area

☐ Area I–College Publications

One of the most complex tasks of the Working Group on Integrity involved the assessment of materials published by the College for distribution to its constituencies. The Working Group identified 80 departments in the College and received responses from all of them. The committee requested all public documents that were distributed between March 1994 and March 1995. Published materials included: the College Bulletin, the student handbook, and all manuals, brochures, newsletters, posters, flyers, advertisements, form letters and general correspondence, promotional materials, videos, and news releases.

The Working Group developed a two-page evaluation sheet that included sections for notes on: attribution, timeliness, accuracy, reliability, strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations. Attribution centered on the question of whether the materials are properly identified by department and institution. Timeliness focused on the extent to which the materials reflect current practice, policy, or programming. Accuracy involved the search for errors of fact or attempts to manipulate perceptions. The final dimension, reliability, focused on the consistency of the messages.

The materials were assigned so that two working group members reviewed each item independently to provide individual assessments of the integrity of the materials. To effect change, copies of the evaluation sheets were returned to the departments.

Another dimension of the task involved the assessment of the College's representation of itself in the media—print, radio, and television. The Working Group assessed what the College made available to the media; it did not assess what was said about the College in the media.

This review of the College's publications established a standing process for auditing and monitoring these resources and, through feedback to those originating the materials, provided a means to ensure even greater integrity of the publications.

☐ Area II–Internal Policies and Practices

This area was not the sole responsibility of the Integrity Working Group. The breadth of this assessment, by necessity, included the Personnel, Student Services, and Governance Working Groups. The analysis included an assessment and evaluation of the relationship between the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, the College's sponsor, and the College; the professional programs and accredited programs within the College; non-traditional learning, college records, the use of animals in research, the use of human subjects in research, human resources policies and practices, and faculty governance and grievance policies. Attention also was given to the policies and practices relative to intercollegiate athletics.

The assessment of the relationship between the Congregation and the College involved a review of the contracts and agreements that had evolved over many years—some of which had not changed in more than 25 years. The focus was on the extent to which the contracts and agreements reflect practice. The assessment of integrity in professional and accredited programs involved a review of the professional standards to ascertain if those were consistent with the mission and values of the College and then to compare those standards with practice at the College. A recent occurrence in which an accrediting body insisted on changes in the curriculum that were not consistent with the College's academic mission were cited as an example of the College's desire to maintain integrity in its programs. Non-traditional learning included the review of departments' learning contracts for internships and field placement, independent study, and foreign study programs. This review included an overview of learning sites and monitoring/supervisory practices to ensure the academic legitimacy of learning activities. The review of policies relative to College records, especially those of the Registrar, financial aid, counseling services, and human resources, but including all departments, focused on their compliance with privacy requirements and with the security of records. The use of animals in research involved on-site inspection to ascertain compliance with the guidelines established by the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health. The use of human subjects was evaluated by review of the College's policies and procedure to assure conformity with professional standards and federal guidelines. The assessment of integrity in human resources policies was conducted by the Working Group on Personnel through a questionnaire to all college personnel that requested an experiential evaluation of the College's human resources policies and grievance procedures. The Working Group on Governance employed focus groups and committee records to assess faculty governance and grievance procedures. Intercollegiate athletics, often a source of integrity questions, were reviewed to ensure the College's compliance with NCAA standards for an athlete's eligibility, admission, financial aid, and retention.

☐ Area III–Contracts and Relations with Other Educational Institutions

The integrity question is particularly important when examining the relationship between the College and other educational institutions. There are institutions with which we routinely share data and information, there are institutions that request information, because they are conducting research or forming policies, and there are institutions with which we consult about our own policies. The primary concern in this task area, however, was not so much with these connections as it was with those that involve a direct primary educational connection—through courses, programs, shared students, or shared services. The College has direct educational linkages to five institutions of higher education and to still others through a regional educational consortium.

The integrity of the first component of educational linkages to those with whom we share data and information was assessed through contact with those departments that have primary responsibility for such contacts, e.g., Office of Institutional Research, Financial Aid Office, the Registrar, and Admissions Office. The Working Group accepted the assurance of these offices that they are guided by their own professional standards and respond honestly and openly to requests for information from other institutions. The College has complex relationships with the University of Notre Dame, including a co-exchange program, in which students take courses on either campus; a tuition-remission plan for faculty and staff children; a primary and secondary education program that permits Notre Dame students to obtain their teaching certification through Saint Mary's; and administrative coordination for registration, use of libraries, reciprocal dining hall privileges, and use of other facilities. The integrity of these relationships was assessed and evaluated through a review of the agreements with attention to compliance. The College also has formal relationships with a two-year college through a linkage program that permits its students to reside and take courses at Saint Mary's. This was assessed by reviewing the contracts and agreements to ensure that they were consistent with college policy and standards, as well as to ascertain whether those standards were being properly administered. A foreign study program with a college in Ireland, an Around the World Program that has a major academic component taught at a college in India, and a program involving a semester in Washington were evaluated through a review of contracts and transcripts. Finally, the College's participation in an educational consortium was reviewed to ensure conformity with College policy and practice.

☐ Area IV–Government and Corporate Contracts

An important dimension of an institution's integrity lies in its relationship with those with whom it has contracts. The assessment of these external relationships included contracts with service providers, special events contracts, facility contracts, student event contracts, and government contracts.

The contract-letting process and contract requirements for outside vendors and consultants were reviewed. Included in the review were contracts for the food service operation, special maintenance and construction, hazardous waste and trash removal, recycling, banking, travel services, and other contracted campus services. These were reviewed to ensure that they conform to college policies and practices. Selected vendors were contacted to ascertain if the college honored the provisions of the contract and paid in a timely fashion. Special event contracts, facility contracts for groups using campus facilities, and student event contracts also were reviewed using the same evaluative procedures. All government contracts were reviewed to ensure compliance with College policy and to ascertain whether the College was properly fulfilling the requirements.

☐ Area V–Copyrighted Materials: Computer, Print, Video, and Film

This area produced some of the most difficult issues for Saint Mary's assessment of integrity. Areas reviewed included the use of computer software, books and manuscripts, television videos, movie films, and the reproduction of copyrighted and non-copyrighted material by printing services, as well as the bookstore's policy on the sale of such material.

The ethical use of copyrighted materials is not easily assessed, in part because there are no clear guidelines for their use, in part because the College does not own many of the components that are in use, and in part because the College does not control what is used. The assessment of computer software copyright policy was simple, because the policy was drawn directly from EDUCOM and ADAPSO policy statements. The compliance of computer users was not considered amenable to assessment without compromising user rights. The policy on the use of published/copyrighted library material is clear: it follows the copyright laws, and the library adheres strictly to its provisions. Films and videos proved to be a murky area because they are owned and controlled by many individual faculty, academic departments, residence halls, college clubs, and the media center. Many of the videos are off-air copies. The library, media center, residence halls, and club policies were reviewed for adherence to the "fair use" doctrines; a "fair use" policy has not been developed for the faculty. Printing services and the bookstore policies on the reproduction and sale of copyrighted materials were evaluated.

Conclusions

The evaluation of integrity was a valuable experience; it helped the College to consider explicitly many issues about which it had made implicit assumptions. It heightened awareness, it yielded many changes; and the expanded definition of integrity resulted in the inclusion of many materials that would not normally be considered.

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Institutional Integrity and the Self-Study Process

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Criterion Five on integrity in practices and relationships is new to the NCA comprehensive evaluation process. This presentation will describe how participants were selected and components and evidence of institutional integrity were defined and evaluated as part of the 1996 Wright State University Self-Study.

Wright State University hosted an eleven member NCA evaluation team for a comprehensive visit during May, 1996. The university's self-study was organized and written during an 18 month period prior to the visit beginning during fall 1994. Criterion Five—*the institution demonstrates integrity in its practices and relationships*—was introduced as part of the NCA comprehensive evaluation process in 1994-95. Thus, there has been limited experience available to Self-Study Coordinators in addressing this criterion.

Wright State University, founded in 1964, is a comprehensive state-assisted institution of approximately 16,000 students in suburban Dayton, Ohio, accredited at the doctoral level. The university embraces a metropolitan mission. In addition to a liberal arts core, there are colleges of business, education, engineering, and nursing, professional schools of medicine (M.D.) and professional psychology (Psy.D.), and a branch campus offering programs primarily at the associate's degree level. Wright State welcomed a new president in February, 1994, and had both visioning and strategic planning processes underway in parallel with the NCA self-study.

The self-study process was initiated by a five member executive committee appointed by the university president in October 1994. Regional accreditation activities have been centered in the School of Graduate Studies since Wright State's initial accreditation in 1968, leading to the selection of the Dean of Graduate Studies as the Self-Study Coordinator. The Graduate School provided the principal staff support. The executive committee was purposefully small, with the charge to develop a self-study plan and select a broader, representative steering committee. A principal element of the self-study plan was to devote a chapter to each of the five Criteria for Accreditation. An introduction and statement of summary and conclusions rounded out the self-study document.

The next step was to develop a tentative self-study outline. The outline for each chapter led the executive committee to select an appropriate member of the university community to chair a subcommittee charged with writing an initial draft of the chapter. The chapter subcommittee chairs became members of the steering committee. For chapter 5 (Criterion Five), the executive committee selected one of its own members, the Associate Dean of the School of Medicine. He had recent experience chairing an LCME accreditation for the WSU School of Medicine. The other four chapter subcommittee chairs and four individuals added for comprehensive representation completed the 13 member steering committee. The outline of each chapter led to recommendations for the most appropriate membership of the subcommittees, including two students for each chapter subcommittee.

An important strategy adopted by the steering committee addressed the process by which consensus was to be reached for a final self-study document. Three drafts were involved. The initial chapters were compiled by the subcommittees (chapters draft). Each chapter was then reviewed by two members of the steering committee, discussed by the steering committee as a whole, and sent back to the subcommittee for revision. This completed the subcommittee involvement. The revisions were combined into a second draft (hearings draft) and sent out for review by approximately 100 faculty and staff selected by the steering committee, vice-presidents, and deans. Extensive written comments were received, though, predictably, scheduled open hearings drew minimal attendance. This stage of the process caused some campus-wide concern. In spite of careful instructions, the draft was criticized for not being in near final form. This, of course, was not intended; the responses were expected to lead to substantive changes. These inputs were reviewed by the steering committee and a third draft (Executive

Draft) was produced. While this was sent to those providing earlier input, the main intent was to obtain response from campus leaders (trustees, president's cabinet). With these final inputs, the final document was assembled by the Self-Study Coordinator.

Criterion Five Subcommittee Process

The first and perhaps most important step in writing the chapter on Criterion Five was identifying appropriate members to serve on the writing subcommittee. The membership of the subcommittee was based on the expertise needed to address the areas of focus of the criterion. The subcommittee included the:

- ◇ Director of Affirmative Action
- ◇ Director of Human Resources
- ◇ Director of the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
- ◇ Director of Center for Urban and Public Affairs
- ◇ Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, School of Medicine
- ◇ Associate Director of Residence Services
- ◇ Chair of Biomedical and Human Factors Engineering
- ◇ Faculty member from the College of Education and Human Services
- ◇ Ombudsperson (undergraduate student)
- ◇ Graduate student

At its initial meeting the subcommittee agreed that its task was to critically analyze the application of policies and procedures that demonstrate that the university acts with integrity in its practices and relationships. A timeline was also established at the first meeting. To guide the analysis, the subcommittee reviewed the NCA's definition of integrity and established a set of expectations to meet its assigned task. The members agreed that they had to decide *what* to evaluate, the *resources* needed to conduct the evaluation, and *how* for the evaluation.

Essential to development of the report was a comprehensive analysis of the stated policies and procedures found in the University's public documents. The subcommittee conducted a brainstorming session to identify the resources that demonstrated the pattern of evidence supporting the criterion. Documents were listed that:

A. describe relationships with internal constituencies, e.g., Faculty Handbook.

B. describe policies and practices for resolving internal disputes, e.g., salary inequities, grade appeals.

C. describe policies and practices related to enhancing access to education and building a diverse community, e.g., affirmative action.

D. accurately and fairly describe the university, its operations, and its programs, e.g., Undergraduate Catalog.

E. describe the University's relationship to other institutions of higher learning, e.g., articulation agreements.

F. support for resources shared with other institutions, e.g., Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

G. describe policies and procedures regarding intercollegiate athletics, student associations, and related business enterprises, e.g., Bookstore (agreement with Barnes and Noble).

H. describe oversight processes for monitoring contractual arrangements, e.g., research compliance documents.

The evaluation process was conducted by answering the following set of questions:

- Are the stated policies and procedures based on ethical values? What is the evidence?
- Are institutional practices consistent with the stated policies and procedures regarding institutional integrity? What is the evidence?
- Are full and candid disclosures encouraged and practiced throughout the institution? What is the evidence?
- Do the practices of the institution live up to commitments it makes to its students and to the public? What is the evidence?
- Do the institution's constituencies observe the tenets of academic honesty and operate without conflict of interest? What is the evidence?

Each member of the subcommittee was assigned a section of the chapter to research and write-up. For each question the writer was asked to provide data supporting his/her conclusions. The assignment was based on the knowledge and expertise of the individual as follows:

Writer	Areas to be evaluated Policies and procedures that deal with	Resources
Director, Affirmative Action	Non-discrimination, affirmative action, harassment, professional ethics and conduct, fair grievance process, discouraging acts of racism, sexism, bigotry, and violence.	A, C, G
Director, Human Resources	Fair grievances processes, retirement packages, growth of non-traditional faculty, professional development for faculty.	A, B
Chair, Biomedical and Human Factors Engineering	Academic honesty, financing of consortial or cooperative initiatives, how institutional integrity relates to mission and purposes, resources, institutional effectiveness, and institutional planning.	A, E, F, H
Associate Director, Residence Services	Fair grievance process, legal and ethical administration of financial aid, student's right to know, growth of non-traditional students	A, B, D
Director, Research and Sponsored Programs	Conflict of interest, research compliance documents	A, E, F, H
Director, Center for Urban and Public Affairs	Conflict of interest	A, H
Faculty, College of Education and Human Services	Faculty's right to know (e.g., P/T), professional development issues for faculty (e.g., sabbatical)	A
Graduate Student	Practices by which the institution identifies, recruits, and admits students accurately reflects facilities and programs, practices related to management of student enrollments	A, D
Ombudsperson	Fair grievance processes (students)	A
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs	Teaching and learning environment that supports sensitivity to diverse individuals and groups, how institutional integrity relates to mission and purposes, resources, institutional effectiveness, and institutional planning	C, E, F

The sections were assembled into the first draft, which was reviewed and revised by the subcommittee. The revised draft was submitted on schedule to the steering committee where it was reviewed, discussed, and returned to the subcommittee for consideration of the steering committee's comments. The final draft was forwarded to the steering committee completing the subcommittee's assigned task.

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Chapter VIII

New Technologies

Measuring Moving Targets...◆...◆...◆

102nd Annual Meeting of the North Central Association
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Rethinking Library Strategy in a Time of Change

Connie Migliazzo
Maris Roze

The 14 campuses of the DeVRY Institutes system offer career-oriented undergraduate degree programs in technical and business fields to more than 30,000 students in the U.S. and Canada. The continually evolving nature of these applications-level programs, as well as the geographically dispersed campus configuration, have presented unique operational and strategic challenges to the system. This process has been particularly evident in the DeVry libraries.

Like those of most colleges, the DeVry libraries have grappled with the need to provide access to an ever-increasing body of information, while keeping costs under control. DeVry's additional challenge has been to build discrete collections of resources to support undergraduate research at each of its 14 campuses. The applications orientation of DeVry's technically-focused programs compounds the need for current information, since applications of technologies change far more quickly than their theoretical foundations.

In the mid-1980s, DeVry's library directors decided that instead of building large book collections that would be subject to rapid obsolescence in technical subject areas, they would concentrate on providing continually-updated information through periodicals. While this strategy served DeVry for a time, a number of factors, both external and internal, began to erode its effectiveness. With the average price for an engineering journal, for example, soaring from $150.56 in 1986 to $ 443.62 in 1992, and the number of indexed publications increasing dramatically, as well, budgets began to be strained. During the same period, DeVry added programs, including telecommunications management, accounting, and business administration, as well as numerous general education course electives. Thus, although the libraries were spending more, their ability to support student requests for information was not keeping pace with the need.

In 1992, the DeVry librarians reviewed their strategic plans in light of these factors and the emergence of new conditions in the information systems field. Key among these changes was the rapid development of new technologies for information access and retrieval.

Index and abstract databases, increasing numbers of which offered full text or full image of some indexed articles, were now available in CD-ROM format, eliminating the need for per-use on-line fees. Subscriptions to large full-text or full-image databases cost less than subscriptions to a fraction of the titles in print. Additionally, most companies offered discounts for volume purchases, offsetting, in part, the expense of replicating collections at each DeVry site. While there were also drawbacks to acquiring electronic access rather than print subscriptions (publication currency, loss of the ability to browse and select title-by-title, etc.), the advantages seemed to prevail.

Thus, in 1994, two large index/abstract full-image databases (UMI's ProQuest GPO Research I, and its ABI Inform Select) and one full-text database (Computer Select, from Information Access) were purchased for each campus library, along with the computers and peripherals necessary to run them. A significant number of print subscriptions were dropped by each campus, to help fund the project.

User response to the CD-ROM workstations has been overwhelmingly positive. DeVry students, with their general predisposition toward computer applications, have embraced these research tools with great enthusiasm. Their cost-effectiveness has appealed to DeVry's central administration as well. Based on the success of this plan, the library directors have been encouraged to explore additional avenues along this path.

Internet access and the development of Internet delivery of proprietary databases promises new modes of effective library access. The concept of a virtual library, that is, a library with no print resources whatsoever, has become a viable alternative to a growing number of individuals in the DeVry organization. Proponents of this idea note that a virtual collection doesn't become outdated or require much physical space. Student and faculty use is not restricted to the facility or the facility's hours of operation. Additionally, one virtual collection would meet the needs of all the DeVry libraries, finally addressing the system's costly need to replicate its resources at each location.

At the same time, the pitfalls of "virtuality" have become quickly apparent. While DeVry students have been receptive to both formal and informal instruction on search methodology, they have proven highly resistant to suggestions that the information they seek might most likely be found in a print resource. Not only have they continued to search databases for information that is clearly not available there, but they have made the appropriate print index a tool of last resort, if used at all. Indeed, students responding to assignments on broad-based topics often have confined their research to the periodical databases, settling in large part for that which was available in text or image. By accessing only articles, and possibly not the most appropriate of published articles, students may fail to obtain a well-rounded view of their thesis.

To a significant extent, electronic access seems to have contributed to an attitude that fails to stimulate curiosity or demand intellectual rigor, but rather that fosters a tendency to settle for what is easily and quickly obtained, whether it best meets the needs of the researcher or not.

Because of these experiences, DeVry has come to recognize that, in an undergraduate setting, a variety of informational formats is needed, as is the commitment of faculty to ensure that students do not restrict themselves to any one type of research tool. In particular, this view stresses the importance of books in the library collection, that provide the background and context of research topics. Books certainly remain an essential element in the general education subject areas. Even in rapidly changing technical fields, a basic understanding of devices and processes is necessary before information on new developments and applications can be understood. Hence, a core collection of technology books is needed to set a foundation for periodical information.

New information formats offer more options to consider, but these must be evaluated in terms of the particular needs they serve in the undergraduate research process. The "virtual collection" falls short in this regard in several ways, just as the traditional reliance on print resources failed to keep pace with changing conditions and needs.

The goals of a higher education include graduating students who know not only how to find information efficiently, but also how to evaluate that information. The ongoing challenge for information professionals is to select the right mix of resources for their particular program offerings and student populations. The responsibility of curriculum planners and faculty is to integrate the use of a broad spectrum of resources into course objectives and classroom assignments.

For its part, the DeVry system has adopted a series of strategic initiatives to support its reconsidered approach to meeting student information needs. Library book purchases in categories established by a system-wide Library Model have been increased. A union catalog of books has been established to allow more strategic development of collections across campuses. Appropriate research-related objectives have been written into course curriculum guides. And, DeVry library directors have worked with faculty to develop structured library assignments calling for the use of a full range of resources.

As access to electronic resources, including the Internet, gains both in fiscal appeal for organizations and personal appeal for students, institutions must ensure that their students acquire the well-rounded perspectives and the research tools that can help them become lifelong learners.

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A Virtual Community College

James F. Weber
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Background

Arapahoe Community College (ACC) is one of eleven community colleges that comprise the Colorado Community College and Occupational Education System (CCCOES). ACC is a comprehensive two-year institution that was first accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association in 1970.

Following enactment of authorizing legislation by the Colorado General Assembly in 1995, the System's governing board, the Colorado State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education, created the Colorado Electronic Community College (CECC). As an operational unit of the State Community College System office, CECC was created to provide college-level courses using various distance learning technologies.

CECC was implemented initially through an arrangement with Jones Intercable's Mind Extension University (now International University College). The System President, Jerome Wartgow, invited Arapahoe Community College to participate jointly with CCCOES in providing student support services to CECC.

It was determined that the initial program to be offered by CECC would be the Associate of Arts. Under a Memorandum of Understanding developed between ACC and CECC, the college agreed to be responsible for admissions, registration, processing of grade reports, maintaining official transcripts, academic advising, and administration of financial aid for eligible recipients. Formal award of academic credit and granting of the Associate of Arts degree would be by ACC.

Under the agreement with CECC, faculty members teaching ACC courses via CECC were selected by the Executive Director of CECC from among the faculty at ACC or from other colleges within the Colorado Community College system. These individuals met the hiring criteria for ACC faculty and were contracted by ACC on a part-time or overload basis to teach the selected courses via CECC. ACC was responsible for personnel and payroll functions for faculty assigned to teach courses via CECC.

Initial course offerings were scheduled for the Fall semester 1995, and a total of 32 students enrolled in four courses with a total of 45 course enrollments. At the end of January 1996, there were 96 students registered in classes offered by ACC via CECC. For the first time, several international students (two from Canada and one from the West Indies) were included in a student population with representation from 27 states.

Instructional Delivery Systems

During a comprehensive evaluation for continued accreditation of ACC, conducted by the North Central Association in October 1996, the importance of establishing uniform guidelines and standards for evaluating distance educational delivery systems became more crucial. To date most accrediting associations have adopted or modified for use the "Principles of Good Practice for Electronically Offered Academic Degree and Certificate Programs," one of the few such documents available for evaluative purposes. Developed by the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications, the "Principles" address such topics as curriculum and instruction, institutional context and commitment, role and mission, faculty support, resources for learning, student and student services, commitment to support, and evaluation and assessment.

The 1996 accreditation visit to ACC focused attention upon key instructional and student services issues that could provide baseline data for future evaluations. Although standard data collection methods were used to capture both formative and summative feedback on student outcomes and satisfaction with the delivery system, quality assurance merited significant attention. In our opinion it would have been extremely beneficial to provide a framework for discussing distance education within the self-study by addressing such questions as posed in John P. Witherspoon's, *Distance Education: A Planner's Case Book.*[1]

- What instructional formats and techniques are planned? Why were they chosen?
- How are appropriate levels of breadth and rigor assured?
- How is interaction—faculty-student and student-student-built into the course design?
- How will student achievement be assessed?
- Does the overall instructional program provide for assessment of prior work and experiential learning? What is the effect of such assessment on completion of the degree or certificate program?
- If exam proctors are required, how are they identified? What are the provisions for security of test materials?
- How will class assignments, exams, etc. be transmitted between student and professor? How will their security and the confidentiality of student records be assured?
- What procedures will be adopted to assure that appropriate copyright clearances have been obtained and that necessary restrictions are observed?
- What faculty development programs prepare faculty members to use the technology? To work with students at a distance?
- How are faculty members compensated for additional time required to prepare and present these courses?
- What is the impact of this work on faculty retention, promotion, and tenure?
- If course material is recorded, potentially for subsequent use, what are the respective intellectual property interests of the institution and faculty member?
- How will evaluation results be made available to interested parties?
- How will the program's educational effectiveness be evaluated? (pp. 180-182)

Student Services Delivery Systems

The challenge of providing student services to the distance learner has been complicated by the tendency to channel the bulk of financial support to the instructional arena and in many instances to underfund student services components. Since Arapahoe Community College has had the primary responsibility of providing student services to the CECC student, opportunities to engage in research projects designed to establish student services standards were sought. Consequently, ACC staff has been working collaboratively with Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE) researchers under a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education (FIPSE) to identify successful and innovative approaches currently being used by higher education program providers in the delivery of student services within the 15 WICHE states. A comprehensive survey was identified and administered to both WICHE and North Central Association members in February 1997.[2] Survey items were based upon the "Principles of Good Practice for Alternative and External Degree Programs for Adults (1990) prepared by a Task Force sponsored by the Center for Adult

Learning and Educational Credentials and the American Council on Education.[3] These survey items could serve as a checklist for Student Services evaluative purposes. Sample survey items include:

Pre-enrollment services—General Information, Recruitment, Placement

- Do you provide separate and specific recruitment or promotional materials for distance learners, or is this information included in "regular" promotional materials?
- How does your institution determine distance learning students' readiness for a class?
- How do distance learners register for courses?
- How does your institution provide general academic advising to prospective distance learners?

Learning Resources

- *Library Services*
  - How do distance learners access library services?
- *Bookstore*
  - How do distance learners receive textbooks?

General Academic Advising

- How do distance learners access general advising help to plan their academic programs and careers?

Financial Aid

- Is financial aid available for distance learners?
- If yes, who provides distance learners with financial aid information?
- What is your loan default rate for distance learners?

Assessment of Services to Distance Learners

- Do you conduct formal assessments of student services for distance learners?
- Does your institution have policies in place to allow for the regular review and/or revision of student service policies for distance learners?

Services to Special Populations

- What services are offered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provisions?

Survey results for North Central institutions can be obtained from Arapahoe Community College, Office of Institutional Research, 2500 West College Drive, Littleton, Colorado 80160-9002.

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Chapter IX

The Role and Responsibilities of the Self-Study Coordinator

It's about Time: Conducting the Self-Study

Linda E. Flickinger

It's February, and you've just been appointed Self-Study Coordinator. The NCA evaluation team will be on campus for the visit a year from September. You have 20 months to coordinate the self-study, produce a Self-Study Report, and prepare for the visit of the evaluation team. What do you do?

Planning is the first priority, because you have a finite amount of time in which to accomplish a tremendous amount of work. Successful completion of the self-study is about time:

- ◇ Allow enough time to do the job vs. allow time for procrastination
- ◇ Manage time vs. being managed by time
- ◇ Live in time vs. live in panic

While every institution is unique, there is something to be learned from each institution's experiences. St. Clair County Community College's recent self-study experience, with the team visit in September 1996, is a case in point.

College Characteristics

St. Clair County Community College began operation in 1923 as Port Huron Junior College, a division of the Port Huron School District. On June 12, 1967, the Junior College was transformed into a county-wide community college, by a vote of the people. Following approval by the State Board of Education, the College was transferred from the Port Huron Area School District to an independent community college, effective January 1, 1968, and Port Huron Junior College became St. Clair County Community College.

Today, the College is a comprehensive community college, with an annual budget in excess of $17 million. Located on a 25-acre campus in downtown Port Huron, Michigan, the College serves seven K-12 school districts in St. Clair County. The College also has five off-campus centers. The College serves more than 9,200 students annually, either through its class offerings or through specialized training with business and industry.

Accreditation History

Port Huron Junior College received its first accreditation in 1923 when the Chairman of the Junior College Committee of the University of Michigan visited the College and assured acceptance of credits by the University. The College was first accredited by the North Central Association's Commission on Institutions of Higher Education in 1930; it has received continuous accreditation since that time. In July 1969, the Commission transferred accreditation from Port Huron Junior College to St. Clair County Community College, following a team evaluation. The College's last comprehensive visit by the Commission was in 1996, when a continued accreditation was granted with the next comprehensive evaluation scheduled in ten years.

Conducting the Self-Study

Our self-study process began in earnest with the appointment of the Self-Study Coordinator (or, in our case, co-coordinators) in February 1995. Our team visit was scheduled for September 1996. That gave us approximately

20 months to conduct the self-study and write the Self-Study Report. We developed a five-phase plan that ended in a successful evaluation visit and a recommendation for continued accreditation with the next comprehensive evaluation scheduled in ten years. The Team Report stated that "the team not only found the College well prepared for its on-site evaluation for continued accreditation, but the team also found a College that had addressed the major concerns raised in previous visits, a College that has established excellent community and business partnerships, a College with sound human, financial and physical resources, and a College devoted to excellent educational and student services programs."

Phase I: Planning/Organizing (Months 1-4)

The first phase of our self-study concerned the process of planning and organizing for next 20 months' activities. There are several crucial tasks to accomplish during this first phase:

- ◇ appoint Steering Committee
- ◇ attend NCA Annual Meeting
- ◇ develop Self-Study Plan
- ◇ establish Self-Study Committees
- ◇ submit Self-Study Plan to NCA for review

The Steering Committee obviously is of prime concern. We decided to set up five Self-Study Committees (Human Resources, Financial Resources, Physical Resources, Instructional Resources, and Institutional Integrity) and to include the chairpersons of all five committees on the Steering Committee, along with the two co-coordinators. Committee chairpersons were selected by the coordinators and the College President, based upon the following criteria:

- ◇ respected by the College community
- ◇ good communicator
- ◇ well-organized
- ◇ proven track record of accomplishment
- ◇ ability to take a global perspective
- ◇ previous experience in self-study process (optional)

Once the Steering Committee was selected, arrangements were made for all committee chairpersons and the coordinators to attend the NCA Annual Meeting. One of the Self-Study Coordinators also attended the Coordinators Workshop. The information gained from the meeting, along with the Commission publications, especially the *Handbook of Accreditation*, was invaluable.

Using the knowledge acquired at the Annual Meeting, the Steering Committee developed a comprehensive plan for conducting the self-study. Prior to developing the plan, the Steering Committee:

- ◇ established objectives for the self-study
- ◇ determined the role of the Steering Committee
- ◇ decided to involve students, especially to design a logo and the layout of the final report
- ◇ determined how to conduct the self-study
- ◇ decided how the final report would be written (committees writing reports vs. single writer)

The *Guide for Conducting the Self-Study* developed by the Steering Committee was sent to the College's NCA staff liaison for review and suggestions, it was then distributed to everyone working on the self-study. Our plan included:

- ◇ objectives for the self-study
- ◇ how to conduct the self-study
  - — responsibilities of participants
  - — committees
  - — how to collect/analyze data
  - — response to previous NCA evaluation
  - — timetable
  - — communications
- ◇ preliminary outline
- ◇ how to write reports
  - — evaluative rather than descriptive
  - — format

The final step in the planning process was to solicit volunteers for committees. All College employees were sent an invitation to join a Self-Study Committee; the Steering Committee assembled the final committees from the volunteers, balancing individual choices and committee size so that all committees were approximately the same size. All committees were in place by the end of the winter semester, ready to "hit the ground running" when the fall semester began.

Phase II: Gathering Information (Months 5-11)

Over the summer, staff members began to gather the materials listed in the Handbook of Accreditation as necessary for the evaluation team (audit reports, handbooks, etc.). Plans were also made for a Self-Study Workshop to be held at the beginning of the fall semester.

All committee members were invited to attend the workshop, which was designed to introduce everyone to the self-study process. Our NCA liaison attended to discuss the Criteria for Accreditation and patterns of evidence. All committee members received a self-study notebook that contained the *Guide for Conducting the Self-Study* and excerpts from the *Handbook of Accreditation*. We were pleased that nearly 70 people attended the workshop, which was held on a Friday afternoon.

The fall semester was devoted to gathering information. The Steering Committee met approximately every two weeks and spent its time working out details and resolving problems. The General Institutional Requirements (GIRs) were assigned to appropriate committees; these committees were responsible for writing our responses to the individual GIRs. Several decisions were made during this period that contributed to the success of the self-study:

- ◇ A Resource Room was established where all materials were stored; this eliminated unnecessary duplication of materials.
- ◇ All requests for institutional data were funneled through a single individual.
- ◇ Two surveys (one for staff, one for students) were developed that incorporated questions from all committees; thus, each group was surveyed only once (which, along with incentives for returning the survey, increased the response rate).

Phase III: Analysis/Synthesis of Information (Months 12-13)

At the beginning of the self-study process, the Steering Committee decided that the final Self-Study Report would be written by the various committees rather than a single writer. An outline for the report was developed, organized around the Criteria for Accreditation, and the self-study editor would consolidate the committee reports into the final document. This process worked well; some recommendations for committees:

◇ Don't get bogged down in grammatical/technical details; the editor can handle these details.

◇ Evaluate, don't just describe.

◇ Establish a format for reports:

  — description;

  — assessment (strengths, areas of concern, recommendations).

Phase IV: Consolidation—Preparing the Final Report (Months 14-15)

A deadline for completing committee reports was established and included in the timetable published in the *Guide for Conducting the Self-Study*; remarkably, all committee reports were turned in within a week of the deadline. The editor then assembled these reports into the first draft of the Self-Study Report. The editor was responsible for writing chapter introductions, transitions, and conclusions.

The first draft was distributed to the Steering Committee and the College President for review. Then, the Steering Committee began the process of reviewing and revising (any requests for major revision were sent to the appropriate committees as needed). This review/revision was concerned with the following:

◇ Were all recommendations supported in the descriptive narrative?

◇ Was the report evaluative rather than merely descriptive?

◇ Was the report grammatically and technically correct?

While the final draft was being prepared, the self-study editor began working with a faculty member from the College's Advertising and Design Program and his students to design the cover and layout of the final report. A decision was also made to incorporate student artwork in the page designs. The use of students in the design process received favorable comment in the evaluation team's final report.

Phase V: Finalization (Months 16-20)

Once the final draft of the Self-Study Report was finished, the Steering Committee conducted one last review: proofreading, checking for grammatical/technical errors, and checking for consistency in the overall report. Once this review was completed, the Report was sent to Typesetting for final formatting. After intense work by our talented typesetter, the Report was ready for printing, now looking truly professional. We had arrived at the finish line on time: the printed Self-Study Report was sent the NCA office and members of the evaluation team a full two months before the time visit. We'd done it—and within our timelines. Conducting the self-study *is* about time: managing, utilizing, and living in time.

Recommendations

After successfully completing our self-study, several recommendations seem appropriate—things that, in retrospect, seem to have contributed to the success of our self-study process:

- ◇ Prepare a plan and stick to it.
- ◇ Establish objectives for the self-study.
- ◇ Choose your best people for the Steering Committee.
- ◇ Make sure everyone starts at the same point (i.e., hold a starting workshop).
- ◇ Provide rewards/recognition throughout the process.
- ◇ Involve students.
- ◇ Keep people informed.
- ◇ Coordinate all data requests through one person.
- ◇ Survey staff and students only once.
- ◇ Personalize communications.

We tried to follow these recommendations in our self-study process; the end result was a successful evaluation visit and recommendation for continued accreditation. Individuals from all areas of the College were involved in the process, and we are still realizing benefits from the involvement of a broad spectrum of individuals. The self-study process is more than something that is done for the North Central Association—it is really a way for a college to come to know itself.

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Maximizing Participation and Communication in the Self-Study Process

Maria L. Hesse

Perspective

Chandler-Gilbert Community College (CGCC), one of the ten colleges and centers in the Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD), was created in 1985 to serve the educational needs of the rapidly growing population in the Southeast Valley of the Metropolitan Phoenix Area in Arizona. Chandler-Gilbert began as an extension of Mesa Community College, but quickly grew into an independent college, receiving initial accreditation in 1992 from the North Central Association. CGCC has a main campus, as well as two extension sites, the Williams Education Center and the Sun Lakes Education Center.

In the fall semester of 1995, there were 3527 students enrolled on the 45th day of classes for a Full-Time Student Equivalent (FTSE) of 1661. CGCC offers four associate degrees programs along with a wide variety of transfer courses, occupational courses, and special interest courses. As of April 1996, there were 93 full-time board-approved budgeted positions at CGCC, including 44 residential faculty, 26 professional staff, four maintenance and operations staff, 18 management/administrative/technical personnel, and one executive administrator, as well as 148 adjunct faculty.

During the years of 1994-96, Chandler-Gilbert Community College conducted a comprehensive self-study as a part of our request to continue our accreditation with North Central Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Institutions of Higher Education.

Self-Study Process

In summary, the purposes of the self-study were:

- ◇ To evaluate the extent that we are providing programs and services in accordance with our stated mission and goals.
- ◇ To describe and evaluate our instructional programs, support services, and facilities; our system of administration, governance and planning; and our human, financial, and physical resources.
- ◇ To improve our existing self-evaluation systems and to provide for continued strategic planning.
- ◇ To provide evidence that the college meets the Commission's General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria for Accreditation.
- ◇ To provide the Commission and the evaluation team documentation to assist in their evaluation of the college.

President Arnette Ward appointed the NCA Self-Study Coordinator in the fall of 1994. Committee chairpersons, each responsible for overseeing evaluation of a segment of the self-study, and chapter editors were appointed by President Ward and the Self-Study Coordinator after discussion with the President's Executive Council.

Steering Committee

Membership on the Steering Committee represented a serious commitment of time and energy. The administration in consultation with the Self-Study Coordinator made the appointments, which included a broadly representative group of faculty, staff, and managers/administrators. CGCC's Steering Committee was composed of each committee chairperson, the Deans and the President, the previous Self-Study Coordinator, and the current Self-Study Coordinator.

Maximizing Participation and Communication

An NCA Self-Study Kickoff event was held in the spring of 1995 for the purpose of orienting all employees to the self-study process. At that time, each employee was given an opportunity to hear about various ways in which they could participate in the self-study process and sign-up for involvement in the process.

Each committee was comprised of five or more members from the faculty, staff, management, and administration. Committees completed the bulk of their work in the 1995-96 academic year. Some committees involved students and community members in meetings; some committees surveyed students and community members as part of the evaluative process. Each committee prepared a chapter of the Self-Study Report.

Some employees had specialized roles in the process such as editing and proofreading, creating graphics and designing document layouts, and collecting data.

To help self-study committees function well and understand their tasks, several staff development sessions were held during the 18 month period.

In March of 1995, the President and the Self-Study Coordinator attended the NCA Annual Meeting in Chicago. At that time, the President and the Self-Study Coordinator also attended a full-day of special training workshops on the self-study process.

In April of 1995, the first meeting of the Steering Committee was held. We reviewed roles, responsibilities, and timelines. Each committee chair and editor, as well as each member of the steering committee, received a packet of materials that included the Criteria, the General Institutional Requirements, NCA handbook excerpts related to their area of evaluation, a copy of CGCC's previous self-study chapter for their committee, copies of at least two other colleges' self-study chapter related to their committee, and other materials.

Also in April of 1995, an all-employee meeting was held for the purpose of "orienting" all employees to the self-study process. At that time, each employee was given a self-study folder with reference materials. Employees participated in a collaborative activity, the NCA Quiz, designed to help them understand the self-study process. To complete the Quiz, groups used their copies of the Criteria and General Institutional Requirements to answer questions. After sharing the answers in the large group, we discussed the process of working in groups to accomplish the task and noted that it was analogous to the self-study process in many ways. The feedback and evaluation forms from that orientation event provide evidence that most employees felt that they understood the purpose, the process, and the timeline for the self-study.

During the summers of 1995 and 1996, the Self-Study Coordinator scheduled our NCA staff liaison for training and meetings with faculty and staff. The staff liaison also provided support and training for the faculty chairpersons of the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee.

The Self-Study Coordinator attended most meetings of each committee to assist as needed. Each Dean and the President provided administrative support for the committees, attending their meetings as needed, and arranged for support as needed.

Forums

In an effort to more actively involve all employees in the self-study process, participation in a series of self-study forums was offered as an option to serving on a self-study committee. Forum participants were asked to attend and actively participate in at least four of six forums offered over the course of the 1995-96 academic year. Forums were held on Friday afternoons at a time agreed upon by professional staff, managers, and faculty.

Forum topics were:

- **September 1995—Strengths and Challenges.** This forum consisted of a review of the strengths and challenges that the college self-study and the previous evaluation team identified. Various presenters discussed the progress that had been made in these areas during the last five years.
- **October 1995—Assessing Critical Thinking.** Tom Haladyna from Arizona State University worked with the faculty on student learning outcomes assessment, particularly in regard to assessing critical thinking.
- **November 1995—Employee Rewards and Recognition.** Collaborative activities were used to involve employees in thinking and talking about the advantages and disadvantages of employee recognition systems. Employees voted that they would like to have a campus-based employee recognition program and they supplied suggestions for it.
- **February 1996—Williams Education Center.** Thirty-five employees participated in a bus tour designed to help them become more aware of CGCC's plans at the new campus extension at the Williams Education Center (WEC). Staff who have been involved in the planning for WEC provided a window tour of the Williams facilities. At several stops along the way participants walked through various on-site buildings.
- **March 1996—Continuous Improvement: Assessment and Evaluation.** The Self-Study Committee on Instructional Programs and Services facilitated activities to help faculty and staff understand the "why's" and "how's" of ongoing assessment and evaluation of our programs and services.
- **April 1996—Strategic Planning.** The administration facilitated a meeting whereby employees learned about the process and the products of campus-wide planning efforts. This forum was followed-up by division and department planning to involve all employees in the process.

Self-Study Newsletters

At the first Self-Study Forum, held in September 1995, employees had a chance to hear about steps that had been taken to address the concerns from the 1991 Self-Study and the Evaluation Team Report. Feedback received from participants indicated it was reassuring to hear that many improvements had been made to alleviate previous concerns; however, the feedback also indicated a need to improve internal communication.

Many committees and councils had already begun to address concerns about internal communication by sharing meeting minutes with all employees and publishing information about issues discussed and progress made. The Self-Study Coordinator also wanted to contribute to the efforts being made to improve internal communication, so it was decided that an occasional newsletter with self-study related information would be published.

Each edition of the newsletter focused on one of the Criteria and at least one General Institutional Requirement. Columns included excerpts from the previous Self-Study Report, explanations of roles and responsibilities, information about new programs and services at CGCC, stories of student successes, and a listing of upcoming self-study events.

Data Collection and Methodology

Each committee developed a methodology and strategies, then gathered data for evaluating its specific area. The committees addressed their topic in relation to alignment with the mission and goals of the college, effective and efficient use of college resources, existing strengths and challenges, and plans for the future.

A common set of tasks that each committee performed included:

- ◇ The identification of programs, services, and processes that are the subject of evaluation for their particular area; and, for each of the criteria, the determination of relevant evaluation questions.
- ◇ The identification of specific types of information needed to answer each question, the types of instruments needed to collect the information or the existing sources for the information, and the method of analysis.
- ◇ The production of a committee report of the evaluation with identified strengths and concerns or challenges and recommendations, following an established timetable and guidelines.

Most committees conducted surveys. The purpose of the surveys was to gather information about employee, student, and community members' perceptions of the degree to which CGCC meets the NCA Criteria. Copies of each survey instrument as well as the results were included in the Self-Study Report Appendices. Findings of surveys were important, but they were only one component of the extensive self-study process that the college had undertaken. Many other sources of information were utilized. The results of the surveys contributed to the overall understanding of the effectiveness of CGCC at that point in time.

The following general principles were used to guide the self-study process:

- ◇ The self-study built upon the ongoing evaluation processes of the college.
- ◇ Careful planning of the process enabled the college to gain maximum benefits from the self-study process.
- ◇ The Self-Study Report addressed each of the NCA Criteria and General Institutional Requirements.
- ◇ The self-study process evaluated all of the college's components.
- ◇ The Self-Study Report would not just describe the programs, operations, and environment; it would be evaluative, identifying strengths and areas needing improvement.
- ◇ Institutional improvement would be the major goal of the self-study process.

The Self-Study Report

After discussion with the President's Executive Council, it was decided that the Self-Study Report would be organized similar to the previous (1991) Self-Study Report, which worked well for the college.

- ◇ Chapter 1 included a brief introduction of the college, its accreditation status, and the self-study process.
- ◇ Chapter 2 described the communities the college serves and provided profiles of its students, employees, programs, and services. It also described changes that have occurred since the time of the last self-study and changes regarding the concerns of the last evaluation Team.
- ◇ Chapter 3 described the mission and purposes of the college, and evaluated the appropriateness of the mission statement given the community we serve and our relationship with the Maricopa County

Community College District. It also provided an evaluation of the extent to which students, community members, and employees felt the Mission and Strategic Goals were being met.

◇ Chapter 4 described and evaluated the governance and organizational structure of the college. It included brief descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of each administrator or manager, as well as a review of the academic division structure and the committees and councils.

◇ Chapter 5 described and evaluated the allocation and organization of the human resources of the college, on which the success of the organization is dependent.

◇ Chapter 6 reviewed college financial resources, including processes for budget development, allocations, accounting, and control.

◇ Chapter 7 described and evaluated the physical resources of the college at the main campus and the Williams Education Center, as well as the planning for the Sun Lakes extension. The building expansion program, technology, and other equipment were also included.

◇ Chapter 8 provided an overview of the instructional program, including descriptions of the degree structure, general education requirements, curriculum process, and related information. The majority of the chapter was devoted to evaluative discussions of CGCC's curricular offerings. The chapter concluded with an evaluative description of learning resources.

◇ Chapter 9 listed each student and administrative service provided at the college, describing recent accomplishments or changes. Then for each service or department, an evaluation was provided along with future goals that were derived from the evaluation process.

◇ Chapter 10 described the college strategic planning process and its institutional effectiveness plan. It also reviewed the evaluation of a variety of critical indicators such as student satisfaction measures, graduate and employer satisfaction, and institutional climate and community measures.

◇ Chapter 11 described the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment plan, pilot cycle, and first full implementation cycle. It included information about the multiple measures being used to assess student academic achievement, and the results of those assessments. It concluded with an evaluation of the process and the products, and provided goals for the future.

◇ Chapter 12 examined four areas of institutional integrity relative to Criterion Five: relationships with other institutions, policies and practices related to grievances, access and equity issues, and institutional advertising and publications.

◇ Chapter 13 detailed CGCC's compliance with the new NCA federal mandates on default rates, program length, professional accreditations, advertising, and recruitment materials.

◇ Chapter 14 provided a summary of the Self-Study Report, an overview of the major strengths and challenges identified by the Self-Study Steering Committee, and a brief explanation of plans for the next ten years to continue quality educational programs for CGCC students and the community.

A separate document included Appendices to the Self-Study Report. Each appendix corresponded to a chapter: Appendix 1 corresponded to Chapter 1, Appendix 2 corresponded to Chapter 2, etc.

As evidence of meeting the General Institutional Requirements (GIR's) arose in each chapter, a notation in a side column was provided. A complete chart of the GIR's and the pages of the report that provide evidence for meeting them was located in an Appendix.

Most of the Criteria were addressed in some manner in each of the chapters. Although there was much overlapping of the information, we tried to concentrate the pattern of evidence for meeting each Criterion in a grouping of chapters. The Criteria corresponded to the chapters in this way:

Criterion 1	Chapter 3
Criterion 2	Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7
Criterion 3	Chapters 8, 9, 10, 11
Criterion 4	Chapters 8, 9, 10, 11, 14
Criterion 5	Chapter 12, and all others

The new Federal Compliance Program was addressed in a separate chapter.

The Self-Study Report was designed to allow for easy reading and note taking. Next to the main body of the report was a "sidebar" of white space for notes containing references to Criterion and GIR's addressed in that section of the report. The sidebar also occasionally included highlights about the college or quotations from students and employees.

Each self-study committee worked diligently to research and evaluate an area of the college in order to provide a meaningful evaluation with the specific feedback necessary for improvement. Each committee also wrote its report and presented its findings in a form and voice appropriate for its purposes. Therefore, when the chapters were compiled into the final Self-Study Report, every effort was made to preserve the voice, integrity, and unique features of each committee's work, and only minor changes were made to keep the format and structure consistent.

The final Self-Study Report was the result of a campus-wide participatory process of careful and thoughtful research and reflection that is helping to guide us into the next century, while continuing to provide the best possible educational opportunities for the rapidly growing communities we serve.

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Preparing to Survive the Self-Study: Comfort for New Coordinators

Thomas H. Youngren

Introduction

Leading a self-study for continued accreditation commits the person who sought or hesitantly accepted the privilege to three or fewer exhilarating years of challenging, sometimes exhausting service and unique professional development. The comfortable minimum is three years, with the first devoted to more or less solitary preparation. Having less time to prepare or taking over a process already begun by others is even more difficult, but our recent three year effort at Elgin Community College indicates such tougher conditions can be survived. During the self-study process we validated the truism that even a generous timeline can shrink alarmingly as we experienced dramatic changes in college leadership and organizational culture. The good news is that the process accommodated the stresses without suffering serious damage and even helped facilitate permanent, positive change.

Since your previous experience with it, the reaccreditation process has evolved to reinforce rather than disrupt ongoing operations, assessment of effectiveness, and planning for change. Moreover, the Commission aids you directly with committed, effective NCA staff liaisons as well as consistently improving workshops and print resources. Benefits come from widely sharing the data gathered to support the task forces that apply the patterns of evidence to how the institution meets or should better address the General Institutional Requirements and Criteria. Doing so as rapidly as that information becomes available can restore or improve communication while supporting much better "real time" decision-making.

Our experience was that by embracing the process as authentic assessment many of the actions recommended in the self-study had already been implemented or were moving forward by the time of the team visit. Recommendations still requiring attention were improved through the added value of Consultant-Evaluator suggestions to help accomplish them. A year has passed since Elgin Community College concluded its process and experienced an informative and affirming team visit on April 8-10, 1996. Trust in the guidance of the *Handbook* and other Commission support resources had proven their worth, and we give particular encouragement to those institutions that need an inclusive, participatory process to affirm their fundamental integrity and renew their cultural health.

Prior Preparation

Ideally the college president has kept board members, key executive officers, and/or several potential Self-Study Coordinators informed of Commission developments since the last accreditation. As at many institutions, the Assessment Initiatives and addition of Criterion Five had increased general awareness, skills development, and anxiety. In our specific case, the response to assessment gave the benefits of extensive faculty involvement; had justified developing a professional institutional research office; and led to securing the services of an experienced, competent consultant to help design the self-study. The latter necessity resulted from the Self-Study Coordinator filling in as interim chief academic officer, the sitting President's retirement, and subsequent replacement searches for both positions. Shared leadership of the self-study is an added difficulty most colleges will avoid, but even such obstacles can be overcome through careful preparation and consistent communication

The Coordinator's key task at this stage is to thoroughly understand, translate, and organize the required elements of the self-study into a process easily understood and advanced by preoccupied, busy, and perhaps even threatened college stakeholders. The Annual Meeting provides the workshops, Resource Room, and networking opportunities with colleagues that are essential to designing a process backwards from the ultimate goal of a clear, accurate, and useful Self-Study Report. The intended outcome of a report model chosen at this time largely dictates developing a Self-Study Plan that is practical and attainable. Effective support includes in-house glossaries of NCA terms, guides for orientation and task force operations, research reports and reporting formats that will be easily understood and used. Their consistent and repeated use throughout will ease editing and lead to the level of understanding the process and its outcomes that is critical to effective college participation in the Team Visit.

Specific college and stakeholder needs must be respected and accommodated in the planning. In our case, this meant committing all constituencies to a participatory, evidence-based process, with the promise of fully open access to and sharing of information. All relevant, available institutional data were organized for convenient use and clear interpretation. An unusually intense amount of internal survey research was needed to validate or allay subjective, fragmented beliefs and suspicions. Committees would be encouraged to frame their own questions and confidently communicate their findings when corroborated by facts and other committees. Mistrust had been major concerns of faculty and staff for years, so their commitment depended on faith in honest research and real change based on it. Healthier organizations can omit the extra climate research but should be able to promote and deliver as self-study benefits support to ease the work, personal value as professional development, and absolute relevance of the effort.

The Steering Committee and the Plan

Formal opening of the process is always important and an absolute necessity when recruiting for an open, participatory one. A semester opening orientation day was followed by a series of smaller, open meetings to promote general awareness, recruit steering and subcommittee volunteers, and capture priority concerns for conversion to objectives. The consistent message was that the self-study process has changed to emphasize authentic assessment. Participants were required to study areas of the college outside their own.

The Steering Committee members selected from volunteers during the orientation period immediately analyzed the suggestions from all the participants and developed our three self-study objectives beyond continued accreditation as their first step in reviewing and completing the plan. Thus deep feeling and demand for change lay behind what outsiders might read as our bland looking objectives to renew organizational culture; restore priority to academic efforts; and provide accurate, complete information for decision-making. A team of more than half the Steering Committee attended the Annual Meeting within weeks of their appointment. This opportunity or a campus visit from the NCA staff liaison are important investments as the self-study plan is being completed and the Steering Committee members are preparing to train and lead their subcommittee members. Commissioning and charging the subcommittees at the beginning of the new academic year coincided with installation of the new President and began two very interesting years for our college community.

Some Notes on Moving Forward

- ◇ Scour the Annual Meeting Resource Room for the most appropriate Self-Study Report example and shamelessly adapt it to your needs.
- ◇ Recruit a writer/editor to help develop the Self-Study Plan; templates to capture committee research data, as well as interim report drafts; and to consult with participants.
- ◇ Complete with staff work the response to the previous self-study and assemble required or anticipated institutional research resources before orientation.
- ◇ Inform all participants before they commit and whenever needed that the Steering Committee and Coordinator will act as filters to assure an institutional perspective and voice in the Self-Study Report.

- Identify and network from the beginning with at least one other Coordinator currently in each future stage of the process.
- Communicate regularly, consistently, and in as simple terms as possible with all stakeholders.
- Refocus everyone often on the objectives, GIRs, and patterns of evidence.
- Consult immediately and completely with your NCA staff liaison about any threat to the success or integrity of the process.
- Close each stage with celebration and allow participants to honorably end or commit to intensifying their future roles.
- Trust the process as designed, delight in unexpected gifts from those willing to help, and enjoy the experience as much as you can.

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How to Maximize Your Time When You Have Less Than Two Years: Through Collaboration, Concision, and Cohesion

Dorothy Kostuch
Kathryn Singer

1996 was a banner year for the Center for Creative Studies-College of Art and Design. We were celebrating the 90th anniversary of our founding as the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts and our 26th anniversary as a college. The College of Art and Design is a four-year undergraduate institution offering a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in six majors and 17 concentrations.

In 1996, the Center for Creative Studies-College of Art and Design also celebrated the granting of ten years of continued accreditation by the North Central Association. Circumstances required that the self-study and final report in preparation for the accreditation visit be undertaken and completed in less than a year. In meeting the challenges of the self-study process and preparing the final report, we learned many lessons. The most valuable lessons begin with CCC: Collaboration, Concision, and Coherence. The triple C's resemble our initials, CCS. "Said fast enough, CCS sounds like success!"[1] The CCS self-study was both fast and successful.

Collaboration

Collaboration began with the President who appointed the Liberal Arts Chair, a full time faculty member, as Self-Study Coordinator. She was released from all her other duties to work full time on the self-study effort. The President met with the Coordinator frequently throughout the process, both individually and as a member of the Steering Committee. He also provided support by establishing an office in the academic dean's suite, with a computer and printer, and by approving expenditures beyond the assigned budget, when that became necessary. The executive assistant to the academic dean was assigned as the support person for the project. As the self-study progressed an open working relationship developed between the Coordinator and the President. Testing ideas, receiving feedback, and correcting misinformation were essential to developing a thorough and accurate self-evaluation of the institution and forming a picture of its future direction.

Being appointed Self-Study Coordinator is daunting; the weight of both the process and its outcome appears to rest solely on one's shoulders. Dispelling that illusion, after acknowledging the seriousness of the task and accepting it, is essential. The Coordinator soon realizes that the process belongs to the entire institution. Everyone is responsible: administration, faculty, staff, students, the whole community. The initial challenge of the Coordinator is to engage all constituencies in the self-study process. Collaboration is the key that unlocks the door to a successful self-study.

☐ Role of the Steering Committee

A critical step in achieving collaboration is the formation of a dedicated Self-Study Steering Committee, whose members represent all segments of the institution. In order to work together effectively, the size of the committee has to be manageable. Our committee was composed of three members of the administration, one faculty member from each department, three staff members, and two students. The Steering Committee is pivotal in extending the network of collaboration. It reaches out to individual departments as they analyze their strengths and challenges. Teams consisting of a person directly or closely related to the area being examined and another committee member from a different area of the institution were assigned to each department. Every steering committee member was responsible for two or three areas, affording them an opportunity to work with members from various departments. The purpose of this arrangement was to ensure an objective yet informed study of each area. Tasks assigned committee members included answering questions about the process, gathering information for the Self-Study Report and carrying it back to the Coordinator and other committee members for review and writing.

☐ Importance of Meetings

Collaboration is also achieved via communication about the self-study process and its significance to the broader college community through meetings. At the outset of the self-study the president invited the NCA staff liaison to spend a day on campus meeting with several groups and individuals to answer questions about the process. An important purpose of the liaison's visit was to orient the Steering Committee. This collaboration between our NCA representative and the institution brought confidence to the process.

Information about the progress of the self-study was accomplished through meetings. Organizing and leading meetings is an essential task of the Self-Study Coordinator. Early in the process the meetings must be informational, involving explanations of the self-study process, outlining the criteria for self-evaluation and the requirements expected of each division, and detailing the role of the Coordinator and Steering Committee members. The format included presentations, questions from the group, and questions put to the group to elicit feedback. Everyone was encouraged to become contributing members to the self-study through further meetings in their departments. Student input is critical to the self-study. Two open forums were held for the students of our college; their responses were carefully recorded and given serious consideration in assessing the state of the institution and in preparing the final report. The Board, too, and particularly its Educational Policy Committee, contributed to the process.

☐ Critical Nature of Technical Support

An essential ingredient of collaboration in the self-study process is technical assistance. The support person should be familiar with the institution, knowledgeable about computers and a variety of software programs, and able to look analytically at the content as well as the form of the document. As a Steering Committee member, our technical assistant had direct knowledge of the self-study, its progress, and its problems. Since the support person works hand-in-hand, daily, with the Self-Study Coordinator, the formation of a positive working relationship is key to moving the process along. Although their roles are quite different, there is constant give-and-take. When first drafts become second, third, and fourth drafts, and deadlines approach, stress increases. Being comfortable with each other, mutually supportive, and laughing a good deal keep the inevitable frustrations of such a major project manageable.

Concision

Concision pertains to the creation of a self-study plan and the writing of the Self-Study Report. Concision proved to be the most difficult to achieve.

☐ Developing a Basic Plan

The temptation of the Coordinator is to write everything, to describe every department in detail, every good action taken since the last self-study. A problem with extensive description is that it may inadvertently bypass self-evaluation. In order to achieve concision a simple, balanced plan must be conceived for the self-study. Ours included an emphasis on strengths, a revelation of concerns, and an exploration of ideas and means for improvement. The plan dealt with the major issues required by the self-study and provided a clear path for departments to follow. Once the plan was accepted and adopted by the Steering Committee, it was maintained rigorously.

☐ Valuing Existing Processes

Another aspect of concision is the identification of self-evaluative processes already in place at the institution. At our college, for nearly a year, trustees, faculty, and staff were actively involved in a strategic planning process. The college's Mission Statement had been reviewed and refined. Specific strategic directions were set for renewal. Nine areas of concentration were identified; and committees were formed to begin the transforming work. Considering the strategic plan from the perspective of the North Central accreditation criteria, we found that there was strong coordination. In fact, the strategic planning process served ably as a firm foundation for the self-study, eliminating the necessity to begin self-evaluation from a point of zero. We avoided duplicating processes that already existed.

In 1994, an Assessment Plan was developed and submitted to NCA. The plan was regarded as a model for the assessment process. After its initial stages of development, the assessment process lost its author and coordinator, thereby stalling its progress. A benefit of the self-study was recognition not only of the significance of the assessment plan, but also the importance of moving it forward. The appointment of a new Assessment Coordinator, whose enthusiasm and hard work continued the development of a sound assessment initiative at the college, proved very useful in our process of self-evaluation.

☐ Writing and Criticism

Nowhere in the self-study process is concision more important than in writing the final report. As Steering Committee members bring in departmental reports and evaluations, it is mandatory that the Self-Study Coordinator and the Steering Committee review the content, weeding out extraneous and redundant material, according to the self-study plan. Even when the task is accomplished, the coordinator still brings her own logic and likes to the project, writing more in an area that is comfortable and less in one that is not. Achieving concision is contingent on sound criticism. From the beginning members of the Steering Committee should be made aware that one of their tasks is criticism of drafts, editorially and for content. Our Steering Committee approached that task shyly at first. After the second and third drafts, however, no one hesitated to point out problems of wordiness or anything else. The critiques by the Board of Trustees, particularly the Educational Policy Committee, were particularly useful because, of all the "insiders," they were most "outside" the process. Honest and constructive criticism is essential to producing a thorough and accurate Self-Study Report.

Cohesion

Maintaining cohesiveness in the self-study document is important. The Coordinator provided strong direction in setting out the original plan for the self-study and in being the primary writer, although others more knowledgeable in certain areas also wrote. As each Steering Committee team completed its research and analysis of departments, the team turned the information over to the Coordinator. The teams placed emphasis on obtaining thorough information rather than writing carefully formatted reports. The Coordinator absorbed the information provided to her and drafted the initial document, one chapter at a time. This was an important strategy requiring full commitment on the Coordinator's part. The Steering Committee, the President, the technical assistant, the Trustees, and finally the entire campus had the opportunity to review the document before it was finalized. Valuable suggestions were offered and incorporated.

Even with the collaboration of all constituencies of the institution in the self-study, and with the achievement of concision in the writing of it, cohesion remained a challenge. Some areas of the self-study overlap so that the same information may be required for two or three of the NCA Criteria. Rather than repeat it or summarize it, steering committee members or others who assisted with editing, were asked to point out repetitions of information, which were then cross-referenced. A clearer report is the result, far easier to read and to understand.

Summary

The self-study process is immense work even with the three C's as guidelines. Throughout the joint venture, working with tight deadlines, both the Self-Study Coordinator and the technical assistant learned many lessons that may prove valuable to others who find themselves in similar circumstances. We know that a thorough and accurate self-study and report can be achieved in less than two years with Collaboration, Concision, and Cohesion as major guidelines.

[1] Remark made during CCS commencement ceremonies, May 1995, by Brendan Gill, writer and critic for the *New Yorker.*

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The Self Study Race: Ready - Set - Go - Revise!

Jim Messmer
Mary Lee Bowman

In preparing for a race, the distance runner will devote many hours to training. The coach will observe and demand changes or adjustments in the runner's form. More hours of practice, more changes and adjustments will follow. In actuality, the process of preparing for the marathon event and adjusting form during the event are more arduous, more stressful, though not as exciting, as reaching the goal.

Imagine now a race in which the runner has multiple coaches. Picture a race in which the distance remains the same, but whose qualifying time has been shortened. If you can conceive of such an event, Vincennes University's Self-Study Race would approximate those conditions.

- The Event: The Race to Complete the Self-Study
- The Runners: The Self-Study Coordinator, the Writer, and the Self-Study Secretary
- The Coaches: Administrators, Steering Committee, Faculty, and Staff of Vincennes University
- The Goal: *The Self-Study Report*

Ready: January 1994, the Planning Phase

Planning for the race began in January 1994. The Coordinator began training by consulting with some coaches—administrators, the previous NCA coordinator, and the NCA staff liaison. In addition, he studied the NCA *Handbook of Accreditation* and diligently worked to interpret the five Criteria for Accreditation.

The Writer and the Coordinator developed more plans while attending the 1994 NCA Annual Meeting. Ideas for organizing and writing were abundant. Other runners offered advice from their races. The two returned to Vincennes, and a form began to develop. The Administrative Coaches gave suggestions, and the form changed. Practice drafts were made of the self-study goals and organization.

Set: Organize Steering Committee

A primary strategy for Vincennes University's Self-Study Race was to involve as many members of the educational community as possible. After many conferences, the Administrative Coaches and the Coordinator began the recruitment of the 32-member Steering Committee. Eleven of these Coaches were chosen as Working Committee Chairs. The *Handbook's* description of the five Criteria for Accreditation determined each committee's area to investigate. An announcement in the *VU News* encouraged all members of the faculty and staff to volunteer for any committee they desired.

In May 1994, the Steering Committee Coaches were united. Strategies were developed; surveys were voted on; and an Official Plan for the race was submitted to NCA Headquarters in Chicago. All of the university community participated in a warm-up session at the university's Fall 1994 Opening Meeting. Area coaches began to give ideas or demand changes. The Runners attempted to adjust.

Go! Collection and Analysis of Data and Initial Reporting

The Race was on! Student, Faculty, Staff, and Community perceptions of the University were tabulated for the Steering Committee Coaches. Open discussion meeting were held in every division to solicit suggestions for improving the University. The written reports of the working committees were submitted to the Steering Committee in December. Discussions and corrections ensued. More than 200 pages of commentary, descriptions, areas of strength, and needs for improvement were compiled. There were changes and revisions with each step. Steering Committee Coaches continued to press for more alterations.

Revise: The Written Report and Its Many Revisions

The Writing Committee began in February to try to condense the Working Committee reports into a 100 page document. The Steering Committee Coaches continued suggesting improvements. The third draft was offered to all in the university community and to NCA for review and comment. More revisions and Steering Committee comments followed. The summaries written by the writing committee were revised. The form was not yet a winning one. The Writer adjusted the form again and finished the seventh revision in August. The Race was won.

The winning combination? Multiple coaches and strong, flexible runners. The Vincennes University education community can be proud of its involvement in the Self-Study Race. Continued accreditation with the next review in ten years was the prize.

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Organization and Objectives of a Self-Study in a Small Rural Community College

Barton D. Macomber

In December of 1992, one full year before most would recommend starting an NCA self-study, the president of our community college invited me, a member of the faculty, to her office for a meeting. She stated that the NCA accreditation visit would be in the spring of 1996 and that she was seeking two members of the faculty to chair the self-study. One, of course, was to be myself and the other a mutual selection. Already two objectives of the self-study had been identified. It would be faculty driven and we would build cooperation in the organization through co-chair assignments.

One month later these two faculty members, masquerading as NCA self-study co-chairs, traveled with the president to an off-campus site for an afternoon of careful consideration of this adventure on which we as an entire college were about to embark. At this meeting we set five goals that greatly aided our college in bringing the accreditation process to a successful completion.

The three of us set forth these guidelines:

- ◇ **The self-study would be performed with the objective of continued accreditation.** This was a given and could not be ignored. But we also wanted the process to be as useful as possible. So how did we do? Quite well! We were granted continued accreditation with the next review in ten years and no stipulations or focused visits.

- ◇ **The self-study would be faculty driven.** Every full time member of the faculty (46) would be assigned responsibility in the self-study. Of course, members of the staff, the part-time faculty and staff, students, and community representatives would also be included (92 total), but the faculty involvement was paramount. In retrospect, the faculty served very well. They became a part of the process. It became everyone's job to complete the self-study.

- ◇ **Each of the five Criteria for Accreditation would be studied campus-wide.** Instead of each area applying all five criteria as it studied itself, each criterion had its own committee that then applied its standards to all areas of the college. The self-study steering committee consisted of the ten criteria co-chairs, two from each criterion. This forced the organization of committees to be campus-wide and include members from across the organizational structure. The self- study organization was different from the college's formal organizational structure.

  Studying criteria across campus with a new organizational structure caused people to work together in new relationships. Therefore, subordinates often chaired meetings with their superiors. And with each criterion having co-chairs, and each sub-committee led by co-chairs, we truly studied the college through new eyes. I feel that when anyone describes how terrible a self-study is, it is the people problems, not the content that are most difficult. With some stress, the process was completed. We succeed in our own education by doing our own work. But, we succeed as a community college with teamwork. The team won!!

- ◇ **The latest technology available on campus would be used for the self-study.** All information to be edited had to be on a computer. However, the technological change in data collection, manuscript preparation, editing, and even publishing sweeping our campus since 1993 was significant. We started the self-study with some stand alone computer units and ended the self-study with a network. Three changes in word processing applications occurred during this time. Our attempts to keep the self-study up to date with our campus capabilities were a challenge but well worth it. We completed the self-study with many members of the staff possessing upgraded skills and a document that we are proud to say was compiled, edited, and published on campus.

◇ **We would try to be inclusive, not exclusive, in our self-study.** Rather than bury a minority view, we would include it in the collection results while seeking, "a pattern of evidence." This was an attempt to have all constituents buy into the conclusions of the self-study. It was often said during the self-study, "Just get the facts. Don't worry how it looks." The campus-wide support and the feeling of success have been a gratifying conclusion to the process. From that January meeting until the self-study plan was unveiled in the fall of 1993 to the entire faculty, staff, students, and community, the self-study co-chairs had developed a timetable, assigned people to a self-study organizational flow chart, and developed indicators with the criteria co-chairs to complete the self-study process. When the study was released to all these participants, it felt like my own child had left on a long trip and I had little idea what kind of person would return.

Yes, we did the self-study to meet NCA requirements. But we gained so much more. As a college we grew, our leadership abilities grew, our knowledge of ourselves grew, our technology advanced and its effective use grew, and our confidence as a teaching institution won over all.

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There's a Year To Go: Now What?

William H. Cheek

It is now only 12 months until your scheduled team visit. The plans have been made; the committees have been given their assignments and are finishing (hopefully) their reports. You have memorized your NCA staff liaison's phone number; your *Handbook of Accreditation* is worn with use. You are paying more attention to articles on sleep disorders and have occasional nightmares that your name will be associated with the institution receiving for the first time a notice of non-accreditation. Other than wait, what more can you and your Steering Committee do? This "in-between" period can produce anxiety (it did for me) but it can also be a time to review, reflect, and evaluate the self-study process. The seeming lull provides an excellent opportunity to review what has occurred and what still needs to be done.

There are several questions you and your Steering Committee might consider.

- ◇ Is the self-study timeline realistic?
- ◇ What have you and the Steering Committee planned to inform the campus and those off-campus about the accreditation process?
- ◇ Are students involved or at least informed?
- ◇ How will you keep the governing board up to date?
- ◇ Has the support of the administration been as strong and as active as you would have liked?
- ◇ How do you get those, other than your circle of supporters on the Steering Committee, to take ownership in the process?
- ◇ How are you contacting committee chairs to offer them the help and encouragement they need?
- ◇ Have you planned reports for distribution to the campus community to supplement the Self-Study Report?

Following are a few suggestions that might make this time, somewhere around the mid-point in the self-study, a positive period. All of the suggestions worked for us. Some, however, we implemented late and we should have begun earlier in the process.

- ◇ **Continue to cultivate administrative support.** We were fortunate to have continuous administrative support, but we did not take it for granted. This includes not only the President and provost or VP academic affairs, but all other VPs as well as deans. I was regularly invited to provide reports to the Administrative Council (all VPs), the Academic Council (deans), and our governing board. Those opportunities to report progress or ask for help were never turned down.
- ◇ **This is a good time to evaluate your timeline.** Plans change, and the realities of your institution may change those carefully laid plans. Changes that occurred during the more than three years of our self-study included a new president, several vice presidents and deans; reorganization of the university; implementation of a long-range plan; and change from a regional to state-wide mission. Other changes were less dramatic, but all offered challenges to completing the self-study on time. Having several simultaneous accreditation efforts ongoing proved to be an unanticipated problem. We could have done a better job with greater coordination. Incorporating many of these changes into the self-study took some time and thought but, ultimately, strengthened the self-study.

◇ **Visit with campus coordinators from other institutions who have recently conducted a self-study.** Now that you have been in the self-study for a year or more and you have attended an NCA Annual Meeting or two, you have a better idea of what questions to ask. Every institution is different, true, but you can pick up excellent ideas, and I am grateful for the suggestions given to me.

◇ **Encourage your task force chairs.** These are people who are involved in many other things; they need encouragement. Frequent contact also allows them to assure you that their reports will be completed, and this assurance will help your sleep patterns. We tried several things to keep the committees on track. For example, each of our 14 task forces had at least one person from the steering committee as a member. We scheduled "appreciation breakfasts" for committee chairs, not only to show appreciation for the work already done, but also to offer encouragement. Having all chairs meet together provided the opportunity for them to encourage each other as well as keep up to date on the whole process. The President and other top administrators can also help. By attending these events, central administrators can give visible support of the self-study.

◇ **Prepare for the various meetings with faculty, students, and staff.** One way to get campus-wide ownership is to have as many people as possible working on the various committees. More than 110 faculty, staff, and students worked on our self-study. In retrospect, this may have been too many, but it was a good way for the campus to be informed. Each committee had at least one student and at least one staff member. Trying to keep students informed presents special problems. For example, many of the student government leaders who showed interest early in the self-study graduated before the team visit. Brief updates in campus newsletters and the student newspaper proved useful, and we wrote several progress reports for campus distribution during the three-year period of our self-study. Meetings of the student government association, faculty senate, staff, and administrators offer excellent opportunities to give brief progress reports. We held several open meetings immediately before the team visit. I am not sure those open meetings were all that valuable, but I am glad we started early and made frequent efforts to keep people informed.

◇ Another way we tried to keep the campus informed was to **set up a reserve file in the library.** This was done more than a year before the team visit; it should have been started earlier. That file included NCA manuals and other publications, the self-study plan and timeline, each committee report as it was finished; and toward the end, the executive summary and the Self-Study Report. The evaluation team report was placed in the file after the visit. I am not sure how many people used the file, but it was publicized. It is important that people know these things are available—especially when your evaluation team arrives.

◇ **Consider preparing some sort of summary of the Self-Study Report.** We prepared an executive summary and found it to be one of the most important documents we wrote. This is a good time to think about format and distribution of this document. We designed the summary for internal communication, because we were concerned that faculty, staff, or students would not read the self-study itself, no matter how brief it might be. (I was surprised by the number who did read it.) The summary was published in booklet form and went to our board, all faculty and staff, and was widely distributed to students and the media. An electronic version of the executive summary was prepared as well.

◇ Related to publication of the many Self-Study Reports and documents is the **cultivation of cooperation of your institution's publications office and printing services.** Our publications office helped with the layout of the executive summary; the print shop came through even when we did not give them enough lead time.

◇ **Consider retaining a good technical editor, and give that person enough time to complete her/his task.** A surprisingly short section of the *Handbook of Accreditation* is that dealing with "writing the report." It would make your job easier if it were written as a cookbook, but maybe not as satisfying after you are done. An Editing Committee was part of the original 14-committee structure. The thought was that the Editing Committee would review task force reports (which would be received several months in advance) and we would have our Self-Study Report, with its maximum 150 pages, in a wonderful polished form several weeks before sending it to the evaluation team. It did not work out that way, and having a technical editor review the committee's work was beneficial.

- ◇ **It is essential to adhere to deadlines;** this is a good time to make sure the self-study is progressing as it should. I would suggest there be a series of deadlines and that each phase be met. While most of our task forces got their reports in on time, some did not. One of the late reports, because of the efforts of the steering committee member serving on that task force, turned out to be a report that received praise from several evaluation team members. If committee chairs do not finish reports in a reasonable time after the deadline, it is important to apply some type of pressure, so that the report is completed. We should have been more firm with deadlines. We did not want to embarrass anyone; however, the problem is that the whole university could have been embarrassed.
- ◇ We tried to **cut down on the quantity of paper by exchanging disks and using electronic mail as much as possible.** Although we had these capabilities on campus, some did not desire to use them, so paper became more important than it should have been. We found we had to do what made people comfortable. One place we were able to use electronic mail was in correspondence with the chair of our evaluation team. After an initial phone call to exchange e-mail addresses, the Team Chair and I corresponded by e-mail.
- ◇ **Use this time to plan your resource and work rooms that will be used by the evaluation team.** As with virtually every part of the self-study, this will take more time than you expect and you need to consider your resource and work rooms early in the process. Even securing the rooms took a great deal of time and effort. Most the documents for the evaluation visit will be placed in the document room much later, but you can start assembling the materials at this time.
- ◇ **Personal agendas of committee chairs and groups on the committees can be a problem.** We did not control this but were able to "deal with it." We did not have a great deal of this, but it was still a problem in one or two instances. One thing that seemed to help was to assure everyone that the entire committee report would be available to the campus, in the library reserve file, and to the evaluation team in the Resource Room.

The North Central Association provides excellent resources in its publications, staff, and Annual Meeting. Regardless of what you might be thinking now, you will complete your self-study. If you can take away even two or three ideas that will make it easier for you, I will be happy. Use those that will help you; forget the rest. Unless other institutions are different from Southwest Missouri State University, the process will take more time, paper, money, and cooperation from more people than seems reasonable. At the same time, we would do very little differently, except to start each task earlier.

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From Self-Study Process to Successful Visit

Patricia D. Murphy
Robert L. Harrold

This discussion is intended to provide an example of the process used at a small land-grant university to form the self-study steering committee, develop the self-study process, and develop the schedule of activities for completing the self-study process. Suggestions for organization of the report and preparation for the visit by the evaluation team, including organization of the exhibit, are provided.

Who We Are

North Dakota State University (NDSU) has approximately 9700 students in 81 bachelor's degree programs, 48 master's degree programs, and 21 doctoral and professional programs. There are about 440 full-time faculty in eight colleges and related schools and institutes. The evaluation team visited our campus in February 1996; our next evaluation is scheduled for 2005-06, without intermediate visits or any required reports.

Selection of Steering Committee Membership

The Steering Committee was formed approximately 30 months before the final draft of the Self-Study Report was due. The Self-Study Coordinator has had extensive experience with the accreditation process and has served as a consultant-evaluator for the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The Coordinator and the President of North Dakota State University developed a list of potential candidates for the Steering Committee that included faculty, staff, students, administrators, and representatives of the public. From this list, 25 individuals were asked to serve; all accepted.

Individuals on the Steering Committee frequently represented more than one group. Emphasis was placed on having representation of leaders from faculty governance, general education, assessment, and major campus committees, as well as key personnel from academic and student affairs. Gender equity and a balance in number of years of service at NDSU were also factors in selecting those faculty and staff invited to serve on the Steering Committee. Undergraduate and graduate student representatives considered to be capable of active participation throughout the duration of the self-study process were invited to serve as members of this group. Similarly, off-campus representatives of alumni and the local business community were selected with consideration given to their likely participation in the self-study process. As a result, the Steering Committee represented an effective cross-section of the university constituency.

The 25 members of the Steering Committee were divided into five writing committees, each with the responsibility for responding to one of the five Criteria for Accreditation. The Self-Study Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator had responsibilities for writing the other sections of the Self-Study Report. A sequential timetable for the completion of draft chapters was developed; a chair was selected for each writing committee. Draft copies of all written materials were distributed to the Steering Committee and to additional readers within the university community. In addition, the Self-Study Coordinator or the Assistant Coordinator attended the majority of the meetings of the writing committees to enhance continuity and facilitate communication among groups.

Each member of the Steering Committee was asked to reserve a 90-minute block of time each week for possible meetings of the entire group or of individual writing committees.

Developing In-House Experience

Each member of the Self-Study Committee received a copy of the NCA *Handbook of Accreditation* as a part of their original materials. As updated information became available, copies were distributed to each member of the committee.

Except for the Self-Study Coordinator, none of the members of the Steering Committee had experience with the self-study process or with the creation of a document of this complexity. One method used to increase the familiarity of writing committee chairs was to arrange for selected individuals to attend one or more of the NCA Annual Meetings. Each representative was asked to attend different sessions, where possible, and to pick up copies of any handout materials. Visits to the Resource Rooms were expected of each individual. Representatives then shared information at the end of each meeting day as well as with the Self-Study Committee upon return to our campus. The *Collection of Papers on Self-Study and Institutional Improvement* distributed at each Annual Meeting was widely circulated among members of the Self-Study Steering Committee.

Communicating with Your NCA Staff Liaison

Communicate with your NCA staff liaison clearly at the initiation of the self-study process and throughout the duration of the process. Learn the expectations, the emphases that may be needed, and any changes in expectations. Remember that the guidelines and criteria are moving targets and that some changes in expectations are inevitable. Expect all members of your Self-Study Committee who attend the Annual Meeting to participate in sessions led by your liaison to maximize their familiarity with that individual's personal style and methods of communication.

Communicate, Communicate, Communicate!

Initial tasks included making all levels of administration aware of the process and involving them in the selection of the representatives of their academic or service unit. Frequent visits were made to Student Senate, Staff Senate, and University Senate meetings as well as to meetings of administrative councils to describe the progress of the Steering Committee and to solicit input. As draft versions of each component of the Self-Study Report became available, copies were distributed in key administrative offices, the University Library, posted electronically, and described in the weekly university newsletter. At least two open forums were held for each section of the Self-Study Report, and written or electronic responses were solicited. Announcements of open forums were made in the campus newsletter and by mailings to all employees.

Communication remained an important facet after the Self-Study Report was completed. A subset of the Steering Committee was created to develop a master presentation to various groups. A set of handouts was developed that outlined the process for all audiences while several sets of transparencies were developed that could be tailored to an individual audience and the amount of available time. Presentations were made to administrative councils, faculty in several colleges, staff groups, student government, and students in residence halls.

Developing a Common Writing Style

The process by which each section of the Self-Study Report was developed in sequence, with the information from one section providing a basis for following sections, fostered the emergence of similar writing styles by the various writing committees. The uniformity of the final document was facilitated by hiring an assistant experienced in developing large documents from various contributors. This individual attended meetings of the Steering Committee, served as recording secretary, and organized a number of events and activities.

Developing the Near-Final and Final Self-Study Report

Decisions concerning the organization of the Self-Study Report must be made as the process comes to a close and the various drafts of sections of the report are compiled. Will the report be bound or presented in a three-ring binder? Will you use an appendix or will supplementary materials be available in the exhibit in the Resource Room? How will these materials be referenced in the text of the report? These decisions should be made with recognition that the evaluation team members are very busy. Our decision was to place all supplementary materials in the exhibit and to provide a list of these items in the Self-Study Report. Since the titles of documents are often long and similar, we decided that access to the materials by members of the team would be simplified if a list were provided to them in advance as a part of the Self-Study Report.

Obviously, some activities or functions must be mentioned under more than one criterion. As a result, we added an index to the Self-Study Report to aid the evaluation team members with their writing assignments.

As drafts from the various writing sources become available, assign editing, proofreading, and detail-checking duties to a number of individuals, both members of the Steering Committee, and faculty and staff who are not members of the Committee. This process helps assure that the majority of errors will be detected and can be used to broaden the ownership of the final document. As the near-final document was developed, our Self-Study Coordinator, Assistant Coordinator, and administrative assistant each read the document independently.

Assembling the Exhibits

The task of collecting evidence to be available in the Resource Room began before the Self-Study Committee was named; it continued until the time the evaluation team arrived. As materials were collected, they were cataloged by topic.

A large room in the Student Memorial Union, which is conveniently located near the center of our campus, was reserved. Resource materials were color-coded by topic and placed on individual tables, which were also identified by color coding. A large work area was provided in the center of the room; pads of paper, pens, pencils, and computers were available to the evaluation team, as were refreshments. Two highly-qualified secretaries, familiar with all aspects of our campus, were available at all times during the team visit. Each secretary had a computer, a laser printer, a telephone, a campus telephone directory, and a photocopier available in the Resource Room. Members of the Steering Committee and staff and student leaders were available to serve as guides or runners, if requested.

The Hotel Work Room

A large room was rented at the hotel for the evaluation team; it was equipped with personal computers, printers, blackboards, large easels with flip-charts and markers, paper, pens, pencils, and refreshments. The hotel controlled access to the work room.

Working with the Evaluation Team

We developed a packet of information to send to the evaluation team members before the visit. This packet contained campus, local, and regional maps; information about the area and the university; the University Bulletin (containing administrative procedures and a detailed description of courses); and lists of local restaurants and shopping areas. Ask team members about preferences in terms of refreshments or if they wish to avoid particular food or beverage items. Ask about smoking preferences for hotel rooms and make appropriate room reservations. Arrange for transportation to campus and within the campus where appropriate. Ask if team members need special transportation arrangements and plan to provide for individual needs. Recall that the members of the evaluation team are on tight schedules and are working long hours. Place yourself "in their shoes" and anticipate what you would appreciate if you were in their position.

When the Team Chair develops schedules for each member of the evaluation team, be sure that the campus personnel with appointments on those schedules have dedicated more than sufficient time to permit adjustments in schedules. It may be helpful if key administrators agree in advance to rearrange their schedules on minimal notice, if necessary.

Preparing for the Unexpected

Someone has stated that, "The first assumption is that there are no additional assumptions." Build back-ups into all plans to assure that activities proceed as planned. Our evaluation team visit was scheduled for February and it happened to coincide with a large snowfall. By having back-up arrangements in place and a flexible evaluation team, we were able to complete the activities as scheduled. In some instances, individuals and groups came to the Student Memorial Union to meet with the team members in rooms we had reserved, just in case.

Have several members of the Steering Committee aware of schedules and available outside the Resource Room to assist, if needed.

After the Visit

After the exit report by the evaluation team, distribute acknowledgments of appreciation in the form of thank-you notes, calls, and e-mail messages to those involved in the process on your campus. Inform the campus community of the overall impression of the success of the self-assessment process to bring some feeling of closure to this experience of the accreditation process.

Accreditation and self-study must be recognized as never-ending processes. Review the suggestions contained in the report from the evaluation team and begin the process of collecting documentation and evidence for the *next* self-study activity!

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Chapter X

Self-Study and Evaluation: Practical Advice

Measuring Moving Targets...◆...◆...◆

102nd Annual Meeting of the North Central Association
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
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The Process of Self-Study and the Self-Study Plan

Joseph R. Dell'Aquila

This paper will discuss some ways for a Coordinator to prepare for a comprehensive self-study and to develop a Self-Study Plan. It is based on lessons I learned as Coordinator for the recent (January 1996 team visit) self-study experience at Marian College, a baccalaureate II institution with a total of 1200 students. To be succinct, I will make suggestions in a directive manner and perhaps in a simplistic way. These guidelines are *one possible way* to proceed. The power structure, internal politics, and available resources at your campus may require different tactics.

You've Got to Believe

My working premise is that the self-study process should be perceived as an important opportunity for a college or university to examine its mission and to better define and enhance its overall effectiveness, informed by assessment, especially the assessment of student learning. In the process, one should obtain information that is used actively to plan and make improvements, now and in the future. In a comprehensive self-study, I assume that all units are seeking to develop the optimal relationship between their functioning and the functioning of the college. Therefore, institutional strengths and weaknesses are to be clearly identified and analyzed, and steps are to be taken to ensure institutional improvement. The self-study should result in a unified and informed direction for future organizational activities.

This paper is unlikely to be worthwhile if your only interest is getting the Self-Study Report finished and returning to a more normal life. If that is your attitude, you may miss an important opportunity to enhance the education of your student body and to energize your institution's intellectual milieu.

Staffing the Self-Study Steering Committee

Members of the Steering Committee were chosen for the quality of their previous work, their ability to bring a project to completion, to communicate effectively with members of their respective units, and for their willingness to serve. As an example of possible Committee composition and duties, I list the members of the Marian Steering Committee and their tasks:

- The President served ex officio and reviewed all aspects of the work of the Coordinator.
- A Board Member was responsible for Affairs of the Board of Trustees, Governance Issues, and Alumni Affairs. She was assisted by the alumnae/alumni Board Representative and an Emeritus Board Member who is an Emeritus Dean from a nearby institution, both acting as consultants.
- The Vice President for Planning and Mission Effectiveness focused on our Mission Statement, College Goals and Objectives, and our Five-Year Institutional Plan. She was also charged with studying and evaluating community service programs and the Administration.
- The Dean for Academic Affairs reviewed the College Curriculum, General Education Program, Library, Registrar's Office, Learning and Counseling Center, and Instructional Computing.
- The Assistant Academic Dean directed the study of the Professional and Technical Staff Divisions and facilitated the work of the Academic Dean and the Coordinator.

- ◇ The Director of Management Information, Grants and Special Projects served as the Coordinator of Outcomes Assessment (Non-Academic), and as the resource person for all institutional data. He had primary responsibility for completion of the Basic Institutional Data Forms and was assisted by the Chief Financial Officer in much of his work.
- ◇ All departmental and curricular issues of the Humanities, Professional Studies, and Science Divisions were entrusted to three faculty members, one from each respective area.
- ◇ The Assistant Dean for Campus Life investigated Student Affairs, Admissions, Financial Aid, Retention, and Athletics.
- ◇ The Assessment Coordinator was the data resource person for academic matters and her primary responsibilities were to produce the final draft of the Plan for Assessment of Student Academic Achievement and to oversee the academic outcomes section of the institutional self-study.
- ◇ The Coordinator directed the self-study, chaired the Steering Committee, and examined Development and Evaluation of Faculty, Professional Staff, and Technical Staff.

Also serving as consultants were the Student Association President, the Director of Communications, and the Chair of the previous (1985-1986) Self-Study Steering Committee. As appropriate, the Dean for Academic Affairs and other administrators delegated specific tasks to other committees and task forces. Other members of the College also had specific self-study duties. For each area under their line of command, each member of the President's Cabinet was asked to state the current status of the institutional priorities for action established by the 1985-1986 self-study process. We found to our delight that the College had successfully dealt with almost all concerns outlined in the previous Self-Study Report. Cabinet members were also responsible for demonstrating that the College met all of the current General Institutional Requirements.

Each member of the Steering Committee was to coordinate the collection of information and facilitate the work required to draft the first written report for their areas of responsibility. The Self-Study Coordinator was responsible for assimilating the results and writing the Self-Study Report.

Start Early, at the Beginning and at the Top

Once the Steering Committee is established, it is time to develop a plan of action. At least two years before the expected NCA team visit, the Steering Committee should develop a set of common goals related to the self-study process that flow from the institution's mission statement and use these goals to develop a mission statement and a set of internal and external objectives for the self-study. Be sure to obtain strong written and verbal presidential support for these goals, objectives, the self-study process, and your work as Coordinator. The full support of the CEO is one of the most important factors for a successful self-study experience.

Our Self-Study Steering Committee published the goals, objectives, and timeline for the self-study process in a December 1993 memorandum. It was signed by all members of the Steering Committee and the entire Marian College Community was asked to respond to it, and state how and when they would contribute to the self-study process. Individual department chairpersons and program directors were also visited by the Self-Study Coordinator to solicit their reactions to the memo and to help the Steering Committee focus the College's efforts on those tasks considered most important by members of the Marian College faculty. The internal and external objectives were derived from those stated in the memo and from the additional feedback received from each community member. Then, the Self-Study Coordinator and the Assessment Coordinator developed an Action Plan for each objective.

For example, an internal academic self-study process objective was to state departmental and program goals, use learning objectives, assess student outcomes in all courses, and review the curricula and student academic achievement at the course, departmental, program, and institutional levels. For this objective, we suggested as an Action Plan:

- ◇ writing syllabi in terms of learning outcomes objectives
- ◇ assessing student learning, using multiple measures of performance
- ◇ departmental and program review and evaluation
- ◇ implementing procedures for review and self-study now and in the future to inform subsequent decision-making.

To avoid possible pitfalls encountered by members of the previous Self-Study Steering Committee, each former member still at the College was asked to respond to a questionnaire asking for opinions and impressions of the 1985-1986 self-study process. In addition to helpful advice, I also learned that the current self-study process is far more rigorous than it had been.

Help Your Colleagues

To provide Marian College Faculty and Staff with the necessary knowledge and skills about the self-study process, and to give faculty detailed tools to examine their syllabi and assess their courses, majors, and programs, sixteen meetings, given by the Self-Study and Assessment Coordinators, ranging from one hour to two days in length, were held during 1993-1995. To inform and update the Marian College community about the self-study process and assessment, the former chair of English started a newsletter: *UPDATE*; the first issue was distributed in May 1994.

Members of the administration, staff, and faculty received materials to aid them in their task of systematic self-study. For example, to help with the organization of their Departmental Reports, chairpersons and program directors of academic units received from the Assessment Coordinator a series of folders in a four inch file box containing relevant information and labeled as follows:

Departmental Self-Study

1. **Unit Plan**
    - A. Mission Statement
    - B. Goals
    - C. Objectives
    - D. Action steps
    - E. Assessment strategies
2. **Unit Mission**
    - A. Mission statement for the department
    - B. Statement - how department mission supports institutional mission statement
3. **NCA Handbook Documents**
    - A. Defining general education
    - B. Criteria for Accreditation
4. **Evidence for Staffing Section**
    - A. Table of contents
5. **Evidence for Curriculum Section**
    - A. Table of contents
    - B. Analyses of courses
6. **Evidence for Majors Section**
    - A. Table of contents

7. **Evidence for Department Outcomes Section**
    A. Table of contents
    B. Senior exit interview

8. **Evidence for Efficiency/Economy of Operations Section**
    A. Table of contents
    B. Advisee survey of advising activities
    C. Advisor survey of advising activities

She also supplied all academic units with suggestions on evaluation methodologies to gather and analyze data, the specific data to be gathered and analyzed, and made a summary of academic data already available for departmental self-study.

To assist academic departments in their self-studies, various administrative offices prepared data for distribution to the academic departments during August 1994. In addition, the Director of Alumni Affairs provided names and addresses by major and year of graduation to department chairpersons and program directors. The Director of Career Services contributed information on the jobs that graduates had taken by major and year.

Members of the Steering Committee chose a comprehensive alumni survey to determine perceptions of the College experience from those who graduated from 1988 to 1994. Board of Trustee members were surveyed using a standard instrument and a Marian College specific questionnaire.

The Self-Study Plan: I Did It My Way

The initial timeline chosen was too ambitious. In July 1994, I developed a revised timeline that ended with our January 1996 NCA Accreditation Visit and a preliminary outline of the Self-Study Report; then all the necessary ingredients for the Self-Study Plan were available. The way I structured the Plan followed from the way the process unfolded and can be gleaned from its Table of Contents:

Self-Study Plan Table of Contents

- **Pre-study Planning**
- **Self-Study Mission Statement and Objectives**
    - Mission Statement
    - Self-Study Process Objectives: Internal
    - Self-Study Process Objectives: External
- **Ongoing Self-Evaluation and Planning**
- **Organization and Planning of the Process**
- **The Self-Study Process**
- **Evaluation Methodologies**
- **Timeline of Items Pertinent to Marian College Self-Study**
- **Preliminary Outline of the Self-Study Report**

Items that a Self-Study Plan should address were identified in *A Guide to Self-Study for Commission Evaluation*, in the section **Developing a Self-Study Plan.** Because the Plan devised above flowed from my idea of logical structure, I provided my NCA staff liaison with a rough guide to where specific items identified in the *Guide* were covered in the Marian College Plan. In this way I was able to present a Plan that was process-oriented rather than a Plan formulated from a checklist. It was mailed to North Central in August of 1994, the same time the College "officially" started its self-study.

Shortly after submission of the Plan to North Central, our staff liaison provided feedback to help us in our self-study efforts. I shared his insights with the President and members of the Steering Committee, and then in September of 1994, issued a memo to the Department Chairpersons and Program Directors that contained our interpretation of the advice given by our staff liaison on how to avoid some common pitfalls:

- The report must be evaluative rather than descriptive.
- The self-study structure should promote **analysis** rather than mere recording of observations.
- Reports from administrative and academic units must use, display, and reference specific data or patterns of evidence to evaluate current status of the unit, provide meaningful conclusions, and provide **specific recommendations for change, for further study, for collecting additional information, etc.**
- All unit **studies must contain recommendations** that flow from their analyses and that are meaningful to the institution; such sets of recommendations should be prioritized to facilitate their use by the Self-Study Steering Committee.
- Any institutional area or unit for which there are no data available for analysis, no analyses done, or no evaluations made on the analyses, must begin **immediately** to identify data needed, data sources, to plan and implement collection, and to analyze and evaluate outcomes.

In the same memo, as an aid to those responsible for producing the Departmental Self-Study Report, I provided a set of specific guidelines for topics to be addressed in the Self-Study Report. These guidelines were presented as *one possible way* to arrange the contents of the report:

1. Brief narrative description of your department
2. Mission Statement of your department
3. Goals of your unit, short- and long-range
4. Objectives for your department
5. Action plan for achieving goals and objectives
6. Assessment strategies to determine how successful you have been in achieving goals and objectives. These should include needed data, analysis of data, evaluation of unit performance, and the ability of the unit to achieve its goals and objectives.
7. A listing and an examination of three areas of strength in your department.
8. A listing and an examination of three areas of concern. With current resources how would you go about making these areas more productive and beneficial? Develop an agenda for action to address your concerns. Develop solutions to what you perceive as problems.
9. Discuss your priorities and the priorities of your department. What is the really important thing that you do that is crucial to the functioning of your department and the College?
10. Conclude with specific recommendations: for change, for further study, for collecting additional information, etc.
11. State specific ways in which self-study of your department will be an ongoing process *after* the NCA Team Visit.

There was also an invitation to attend a small group meeting to discuss the method of departmental self-study and to answer any questions that may have arisen. These meetings continued throughout the 1994-1995 academic year.

And Wear a Bullet-Proof Vest

Naturally, some departments used none of the resources provided. However, I still think it was important for members of the campus community to know that assistance was available, if desired. Because many members of our college community believed that the College was already performing well, some questioned the value of an externally-mandated evaluation process and the need for institution-wide assessment and improvement. The meetings on self-study mentioned at the beginning of the **Help Your Colleagues** section were somewhat successful in convincing some colleagues that you don't really know if you're doing well unless you assess and evaluate at the course, department, program, and institutional levels.

Although we had some scattered evidence of student achievement, there was no systematic approach to gathering and evaluating the necessary information; one had to be developed. It was certainly true that this required an additional effort by almost everyone and consequently some members of the community were critical and uncooperative. Our NCA staff liaison visited the campus in November of 1994 and at a meeting with department chairpersons and program directors, he spoke of the new NCA requirements for accreditation that emphasized student learning outcome measures and institutional integrity. He responded to questions throughout the day and allayed many concerns. I would definitely recommend having your liaison visit if your campus is less than committed to the self-study process.

For those departments that showed little progress after the first six months had passed, one department's self-study was sent to show how that group approached the task. As reports arrived, they were subjected to a rigorous analysis and were returned with both a narrative and checklist assessment with suggestions for improvement. When academic departments received negative feedback on their reports and were told to resubmit them, it produced a somewhat unpleasant situation for this Coordinator and the Assessment Coordinator. But we remained steadfast and eventually, albeit somewhat begrudgingly, we received the vast majority of reports. Efforts by the Dean for Academic Affairs and the President produced all needed missing information.

As a Coordinator, expect some difficult times but take comfort in knowing that most members of your college or university will praise your efforts and respect you for leading a most important and very difficult project.

Ed. The *Guide to Self Study for Commission Evaluation* was replaced by the *Handbook of Accreditation, 1994-96.*

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Community Ownership of the Self-Study Process

Michael J. Puglisi

There are several ways to approach self-study, and no single template is universally accepted as the proper formula for conducting a self-study. The process can be accomplished by a few key persons in the institution working in relative isolation, or it can encompass a wide spectrum of the campus community as active contributors. Self-study can be approached as merely a hoop to be jumped through at various intervals to satisfy the requirements of a regional accrediting body, or it can represent a true opportunity for community introspection and improvement. Adopting the latter option in each of these two areas leads to a fuller and much more enriching experience for the institution as a whole. An essential element in achieving this fuller context for self-study is the challenge of building and fostering a broad sense of ownership in the process. Each individual on campus should be encouraged to feel connected, and the institution must make a conscious effort to convince everyone that they have a stake in the outcome of the self-study, beyond the accreditation issue. The Self-Study Coordinator, the steering committee, and college officers should take every opportunity to emphasize the importance of every contributor to the self-study, thereby enhancing the atmosphere of community ownership.

Marian College of Fond du Lac initiated its self-study more than two years prior to the scheduled team visit, and from the start, the administration of the college decided that the process should include a broad range of people from across the campus and that self-study should be presented to the entire community as a valuable experience for reflection, with an eye toward institutional improvement. Given this perspective, the process included a basic goal of fostering interest, participation, and understanding throughout the college community.

The Steering Committee and the Self-Study Plan

Marian College concluded that creating the kind of community ownership envisioned started with the appointment of the steering committee. A fundamental decision was made that the committee should include a broad representation from the faculty, administration, and support staff, so that each constituency on campus would feel a direct link to the self-study process. Further, in defining the roles and responsibilities of steering committee members, it was decided that in addition to being primary contributors to the report itself, they would also serve as liaisons between the committee and their constituencies, maintaining an essential dialogue in the process.

The Self-Study Plan—formulated by the steering committee, submitted to North Central, and circulated on campus—identified incorporating the entire college community in the self-evaluation process as a major goal of the project and outlined the desirability of a collaborative effort involving all offices within the college. The steering committee anticipated that this process would encourage members of the community to reflect on their understanding of the college mission and the "Marian Experience," on their role in contributing to them, and on honest analysis of their own performance. The plan also articulated the goal of linking this self-examination to the strategic planning process.

Above all, the steering committee continually conveyed the message that the importance of self-study goes beyond reaccreditation and relates to the future of the institution. Self-study provides a benchmark for growth, development, and improvement, and therefore, everyone benefits from active participation.

A key component of ensuring a successful community-inclusive self-study process was the public and frequent show of support by the administration of the college. From the appointment of the steering committee through the campus debriefing after the visit, the president and other administrative officials took every opportunity to stress the importance of the process and to make it a focal point for the college community. By the time that the team visit occurred, there were very few people on campus who had not had direct and regular contact with a member or members of the steering committee over the entire two year period of the self-study.

Strategies

This did not happen by accident; the committee consciously strategized ways to maintain the dialogue and encourage a sense of ownership of the process on campus.

- After the steering committee was appointed and empowered by the president of the college, we held an orientation session for the entire college community. The president personally encouraged all college faculty and staff members to attend, and he opened the session with an endorsement of the process and a message stressing the importance of self-study to the institution. After giving an overview of the process and timelines, we introduced the committee members and explained their liaison role. This kick-off function set the tone for collaborative involvement and appreciation for the process within the college community.

- During the two-year course of the self-study, I (as chairperson of the steering committee) was on the agenda of every meeting of the Administrative Council, the Council of Academic Chairpersons, the Academic Affairs Staff, and the Faculty Senate to provide regular updates and answer questions. This allowed everyone in those constituencies to feel an immediate relationship to the process.

- Likewise, steering committee members similarly reported and fielded questions at their regular academic division or administrative unit meetings.

- The data gathering process was purposely designed to encourage participation. Rather than merely assigning committee members to research particular areas for the report, the committee formulated the strategy of asking each academic program and administrative or support office to write its own self-study, according to a common template. These reports served two functions. First, they provided valuable foundational data for the institutional report. Second, related to the larger context, they required each unit within the college structure to become involved in the process. In this way, the institutional report became more *their* self-study because they had *actively* contributed to it. Further, creating unit reports encouraged everyone to make the connection between self-study and institutional improvement. To ensure that the individual units would see the value in their reports—and to signify that the institution appreciated the effort that went into producing the documents—steering committee members not only read each one, but also provided constructive feedback to the units.

- Community input in the self-study document is essential. Although the steering committee did the actual writing of the institutional report, drafts were circulated on campus, first to the vice presidents and academic division chairpersons, and then to the entire college community. The committee made a concerted effort to reach faculty and staff members by making copies of the draft widely and easily accessible, and repeatedly stressed the importance of each person being familiar with the report. However, these messages were delivered in the positive tone of an invitation, rather than an adversarial tone of a mandate, thereby encouraging a voluntary sense of participation and ownership. At each step, feedback was solicited and incorporated into considerations for revisions.

- A draft was circulated to members of the Board of Trustees, who then held a retreat at which they were briefed on the self-study process and offered the opportunity to respond to the report. Their suggestions were carried back to the steering committee for consideration.

- To further extend community involvement in the self-study, the steering committee organized focus groups of students from each curricular area (day, evening/weekend, and graduate programs), adjunct faculty members, and alumni to read and respond to the report. Each focus group met in a setting conducive to dialogue and free exchange of ideas. The steering committee also took these responses into account in formulating the final institutional report.

◇ The steering committee decided to personally invite each Marian College employee—faculty and staff—to further contribute to the self-study by requesting that employees submit one-page documents describing their positions at the college and offering a brief statement of how they perceived their contribution to the college mission. These submissions were entirely optional, and more than 50 percent of the campus community responded. The responses, which were bound and supplied to evaluation team members, further allowed employees to reflect and participate in the self-study.

◇ Preparation for the actual visit included informing all constituencies that team members could and would speak to anyone on campus, not just meet with administrative officers or academic chairpersons. An effort was made, through the steering committee, to make everyone feel familiar with the process and welcome to participate during the visit, particularly during the open sessions.

◇ Within hours of the team's departure from campus, the president convened an informational session for the entire campus. This event marked a culmination of the process that began two years earlier with the campus orientation session. Two themes pervaded the president's remarks. First, the successful outcome of the self-study resulted from a total campus effort, for which everyone should be congratulated. Second, the self-study pointed the way for continued institutional improvement in the future.

Conclusion

The strategies described above were designed to saturate the campus with the topic of self-study. The steering committee wanted to ensure that everyone on campus was familiar with the process and that the evaluation team would find a campus community well-versed in the activities of the committee and the findings of the self-study. Most specifically, however, the committee fully appreciated the priority of creating a broad sense of community ownership on campus for self-study as an essential avenue in working toward institutional improvement and fostering the conviction that everyone on campus plays a part in achieving growth. It is gratifying to note that this true sense of the importance of self-study was realized at Marian College, and that it has carried over beyond the re-accreditation process in the form of several initiatives designed to encourage continued monitoring of progress.

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Self-Study Process: Making It a Win–Win Process

Karen A. Nicodemus

Fortunately, or unfortunately, accrediting agencies do not allow institutions to choose when to complete the self-study process. If given the choice, I am afraid most of us would hold out for that elusive, perfect time for faculty, staff, and students to engage in this comprehensive process. Cochise College successfully completed the self-study process in spring 1996. The NCA Commission accepted the evaluation team's recommendation for continued accreditation with the next comprehensive evaluation scheduled in ten years and a focused visit scheduled for 1999-00. The College's self-study and team visit occurred at a time of accelerated change within the institution. The College leadership team (President and Vice-Presidents) was new and a major facility expansion as well as an administrative computer conversion were taking place. In addition, the College was in the midst of implementing a comprehensive institutional effectiveness model, including planning, budgeting, and assessment processes. College administrators were implementing changes that not all faculty and staff embraced—not exactly the perfect time for an accreditation process.

This session will provide practical advice, coupled with a lighthearted look at the self-study process and making it a win-win situation. Several years ago, the Nike corporation in a series of ads coined the phrase, "Image is Everything." As an experienced Self-Study Coordinator, albeit a reluctant one initially, I would offer the following advice for someone in the same position, "Perspective is Everything." As an institution moves through the self-study process, you will face periods of great satisfaction offset by fear that you will never produce the finished product. Throughout these periods of highs and lows, focus on keeping yourself and the institution in a win-win situation.

The following is a brief overview of what will be discussed in session. Participants will also be asked to share their own suggestions for ensuring a win-win process.

Identify a Win-Win Strategy

My first piece of advice is to focus first on the opportunity for improvement and secondly, on meeting accreditation requirements. In early meetings, faculty or staff would sometimes comment that "we need to do this for North Central" or "what will NCA say if we do this." The first step in developing a winning strategy is to view the accreditation process as an opportunity for institutional improvement. By clearly focusing on improvement, the key to making decisions remains "what does this mean to our students (or college)" versus taking actions solely meant to please NCA evaluators.

Secondly, conduct the self-study within the context of what is happening at your institution. At our college this meant recognizing that it is difficult to assess a moving target. College administrators recognized major initiatives, such as the implementation of an effectiveness model, would still be in progress at the time of the NCA team's visit.

This brings up another key point in developing a win-win situation—*remember* the members of your evaluation team are **Consultant**-Evaluators. Cochise College saw the team visit as an opportunity for outside evaluators to assess and validate (hopefully) that the College was moving in the right direction. Finally, of course, you cannot ignore the need to meet the requirements of the accreditation process—just keep it in perspective.

Select Your Self-Study Team Wisely

Your self-study process must be a participatory and broad-based, involving administrators, faculty, staff, students, and community members. Obviously you are not in a position to select who will provide input but it is important to carefully select committee members to solicit, analyze, and summarize information. Your team needs to function exactly as that—a team. Members should recognize their individual and collective roles, respect one another, stay focused on the task at hand, and keep their perspective.

Another element of team-building is the value of attending conferences like this one and asking questions of others familiar with the self-study process. Of course, this also includes your NCA staff liaison who will answer all questions, but more importantly, can be a great confidence booster.

Stay Focused

Although the self-study process is one of the most important activities a college can undertake, it will be forced to compete with the day-to-day demands of your college (and your own personal life). At Cochise College, given the number of other initiatives involving faculty and staff, the self-study process evolved in spurts rather than a continuous, consistent effort. It is critical for the Self-Study Coordinator to take the lead in keeping your team focused and the process moving. At Cochise College, we also found it necessary to adjust our strategies to ensure the successful completion of the self-study process. The key is staying tuned into your overall goal of assessing your college with the intent to bring about improvement (while meeting the requirements of the accreditation process).

Be Prepared

As you move from the self-study process into preparing for the evaluation team's visit, pay attention to details. The College's self-study team members should place themselves in the role of the team member in preparing Resource Room materials. The chair of the evaluation team will help establish the team's agenda but it will be up to the college to prepare the Resource Room. For you to truly receive the full benefit of the team's visit, recognize the demands on the team and the importance of making information accessible and pertinent.

It is important throughout the self-study process that you have shared information with faculty, staff, students, and community members, and to have focused on the role of the consultant-evaluator. The time spent preparing for the evaluation team is directly related to the success of the team in being able to fairly assess the status of the college.

Perspective Is Everything

As we moved closer to the end of the self-study process, it was easy to lose our perspective. The focus shifted clearly from self-improvement to concern for "how many years of continuing accreditation will we receive." Obviously, you and your colleagues have prepared long and hard for the visit and want your efforts to be rewarded with a maximum accreditation recommendation. However, you do not want to lose the results of your own self-study—what were the strengths and challenges identified? How will you move forward in addressing the challenges facing your college? How will you take advantage of the strengths identified? Your college's commitment to closing the loop between the self-study process and team recommendations and action is the key to institutional improvement and making the accreditation process a winning proposition.

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Team Development for Accreditation: From Self-Study to the Team Report

Lawrence N. Dukes
Harriet G. Friedstein

This paper is a case study of how a small rural community college maintained momentum through the "ups and downs" of the two-year process of accreditation. What started as a challenge to the small number of faculty and staff, ended with a euphoria of completion. The effects of accreditation have been most satisfying, especially in uniting the entire college into a collaboration of equals who took on a task and finished it. The board, community members, faculty, students, and the business community, all worked together to complete the process. This partnership has resulted in an optimistic and confident environment at the college. This paper addresses the steps that Southern State Community College took to apply its limited resources for the accreditation process.

Decision to Move Ahead

At the North Central Association Annual Meeting in March 1995, the College team, including the new President, who had not yet begun his tenure; the acting President; the acting academic dean; and a campus director, decided to move enthusiastically ahead with the accreditation process. The College had already postponed the evaluation team visit for one year, because of the administrative changes in progress. Further delay was not feasible and would have interrupted the momentum of the effort. The following summer, a new academic vice president was appointed, and for the new administrative team, the self-study process represented a wonderful opportunity to take an in-depth look at the institution.

- **Role of the Self-Study Coordinator.** The individual selected for this position must be someone whom the entire college community respects and who is willing to serve in this capacity for two years. In our case, this was a member of the English faculty; however, it might have been anyone who writes well and quickly, and who can and is willing to make revisions. Giving this faculty member sufficient release time was necessary to accomplish the task. Although at times it appeared that not much had happened, as the deadline for the final document approached, the Coordinator never had enough time. The Coordinator must be someone who can ingest information from a variety of sources and synthesize this into a coherent document that displays the true picture of the college. Finally, the final report must be written in a positive and completely honest manner. We ask much of the Coordinator; therefore, being honest with the person selected is necessary so that there will be no misgivings at the final hour.

- **Building a team spirit.** The importance of the North Central evaluation and all that it involves must be continually stressed to the entire college community. The evaluation team members were always considered to be colleagues who brought a great deal of experience to the task and who could be of significant value to us in the development of the College.

  If a sense of excitement is to be developed, the flow of information has to be consistent and must be discussed in open meetings, rather than simply distributed through the usual channels. That is not to say that drafts of the self-study should not be distributed regularly, but paper flow rarely generates much enthusiasm. The Self-Study Coordinator needs to have patience to listen to and to guide the discussion at the meetings.

- **Development of a realistic timeline.** Working backward from the scheduled evaluation team's visit and allowing extra time between tasks for unanticipated obstacles, two years is a valid time to plan for the evaluation process. A draft of the self-study that is close to the final version must be available to the North Central staff liaison for his or her review, with sufficient time for the college to rewrite the document. Meetings cannot be convened too closely together when considering vacation periods, registration times, and the individual workloads.

◇ **Plan for the self-study.** The heart of the accreditation process is the Self-Study Report. It takes effort by the entire college community to assess the environment, determine the institution's strengths and weaknesses, and decide what needs to be done to effect change.

We charged the Coordinator with the organization of the Steering Committee and subcommittees, to determine the timeline for these committees, and to set the goals for the working document. This is not a job for the "faint of heart," for the Self-Study Coordinator needs to press people to meet the deadlines for all facets of the self-study.

◇ **Contact with the NCA staff liaison.** The person assigned to the college by the North Central Association is the individual who can offer professional assistance; he or she has been through this process often and is willing to help. We stayed in contact with our NCA staff liaison, who remained very helpful throughout the process. This individual can provide invaluable assistance to the Self-Study Coordinator, especially in the review of the near-final document. As is true throughout the process, it is important to be honest with the NCA staff person if you expect to get an honest appraisal of your direction.

◇ **Recruiting Steering and Sub-Committee Members for the Self-Study Report.** Top management must set the stage for cooperation, by announcing the organization of the self-study process, defining the role of the Self-Study Coordinator, and asking for the cooperation of the entire college body. For without this mandate, the Coordinator will be placed in a difficult position with his or her colleagues. Faculty and staff are busy and may not find time for the meetings, surveys, research, and writing of the sections of the document.

◇ **Recruitment of community members.** Members of the community who had worked with the College in specific projects and in a variety of capacities were invited to participate. There were representatives from business, schools, hospitals, social service agencies, and other organizations with which the college has close ties. Each college has its own community members who might be willing to be part of the accreditation process. It was no different for us, so we invited people to attend meetings and explained the importance of the accreditation process and our expectation for their participation in the process. They should be willing to explain their involvement and hopefully the success of the relationship with the college. Do not forget the involvement of the board members who should be advised of the progress of the self-study at periodic intervals during the year. Our board members were very helpful in explaining their role and support of the administration and the College.

◇ **Writing the Self-Study Report: draft by draft by draft.** The Self-Study Coordinator will write the report and distribute copies to the Steering Committee members, asking them to review the draft carefully and make changes, additions, or deletions. Other people who have been involved in the meetings may also be sent the draft. The review is critical to the success of the project, so it is important that as many people as possible have a chance to read the document completely. These people should check for consistency, accuracy, and overall flavor of the college climate. In all likelihood, there will be many drafts before the deadline when the report is sent to the team members.

◇ **Preparation of the Self-Study Report.** Although there is no one way to prepare the final document, the look of the final Self-Study Report should stand the test of time. It will be a while before the next accreditation visit, and this document will be read many years later. Again, the NCA staff liaison offered helpful suggestions.

◇ **Preparation for the team visit.** The Self-Study Coordinator took on the monumental task of coordinating the details for the team visit. Because Southern State is located in a small town, with limited housing, we were frank with the Team Chair about the modest accommodations. We worried needlessly; this was of no concern to team members. A Resource Room was designated and adapted for the team. All files and documents were assembled, organized by category, and placed within the Resource Room.

The Self-Study Coordinator corralled computers, printers, and paper both for the motel room and the Resource Room at the College. In the two months before the team visit, the College President and Self-Study Coordinator kept in touch with the Team Chair to complete logistical arrangements for the visit. Team member needs were varied; some needed transportation from the airport, others needed area maps, still others needed specific software for the computer, and so on.

The meetings for the various constituencies were scheduled. We again advised those people who were attending any session—whether it was the board, community members, support staff, or faculty—of the purpose of the visit and the positive nature of the session. This was not considered a time for griping, but a chance to assess honestly the college environment. Setting the tone for the meetings was important for the administration. This does not mean that the administration should orchestrate what people say; on the contrary, each person should be free to comment about the college's strengths and weaknesses. While everyone expected the open sessions to be constructive, faculty and staff were encouraged to be positive and honest in explaining the shortfalls. In this way, the team would recognize how to help the college in the final report.

◇ **Arrangements at the time of the team visit.** The idea for the team visit is to give the evaluation team a real sense of what the college is and to introduce the decision-makers. In other words, you want to know them well enough that everyone is comfortable and can share easily—you want them to know who you are.

The opening dinner with the team was held at the President's home. This was done for two reasons: one, as mentioned earlier, was to allow the team members to meet the College team in a nonthreatening, social setting; the second reason was to put the College staff and faculty at ease in working with the team members by seeing them in this relaxed atmosphere. The College personnel represented a cross-section of faculty, staff, and administrators. It should be noted that it was the Faculty Union president who picked up the team members at the airport. This emphasized the sense of teamwork at the College.

◇ **Dissemination of the information following the team visit.** We recorded the final comments offered by the chair of the team at the exit session. These comments were transcribed with an appropriate heading from the President and sent to all College faculty, staff, board members, and people from community group who participated in the meetings during the team visit. This follow-up focused on the success of the visit, and maintained a good feeling throughout the College community.

◇ **Final report of the team and reaccreditation by NCA.** When we received the Team Report, we circulated it throughout the College and asked everyone for comments and factual corrections. There was renewed discussion about the process and visit, in which positive feelings were again generated. When the North Central Association sent the letter affirming that Southern State was granted continued accreditation with the next comprehensive review in ten years, we rejoiced with the entire college community, but we did not neglect the recommendations of the team.

◇ **The next step: using the self-study and the recommendations in the Team Report.** We were grateful for the self-study and viewed it as an opportunity to examine where we had been, where we are, and where we want to be in the next few years. The scrutiny of the mission, goals, programs, processes, and organization was helpful to us; it gave us a chance for open discussion with all segments of the College. Conversations begun in meetings carried out into the cafeteria, hallways, and in private offices. Our first reaction after the team visit was relief. It was over, and the NCA had granted the College continued accreditation and scheduled the next comprehensive evaluation in ten years. Then, a letdown followed as the realization that not everything we had hoped to accomplish in the visit was done. Reading the final report and beginning to implement its recommendations soon took over. The self-study process, the team visit, and the Team Report had helped the College to more clearly understand its strengths and weaknesses and the actions necessary to move ahead.

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Getting the Entire Campus Community Involved

William Haigh

According to the *Handbook of Accreditation:*

> A Self-Study Report should speak for an entire institution, not for any single group within it. Therefore, it is important that the self-study process allow as wide an involvement as possible-from administrators, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and trustees. (NCA, 1994, 69)

With this in mind, Northern State University (NSU) began preparing for its 1996-97 self-study.

One of the first things that the coordinators of Northern State University's self-study looked for were individuals on campus who had taken part in the previous NCA self-study. It was surprising to find that there were very few people who had participated in the 1987 self-study. Persons that had served on the Steering Committee or helped in writing and editing the Self-Study Report nearly ten years before were no longer available for consultation. Although many of the faculty members, administrators, support staff, and career service personnel who were on campus in 1987 are present today, very few remember participating in that self-study. Upon looking at the small list of personnel involved in the 1987 self-study, it is obvious why so few of those presently employed by the university were familiar with the process and the results of the previous NCA self-study. From the time the Coordinators were appointed, it became apparent that the current self-study must involve the entire campus and related constituencies.

The remainder of this paper describes the attempts of the Self-Study Coordinators to get the entire campus community involved in the self-study.

Self-Study Committees

☐ Steering Committee

More than two years before the scheduled visit of the NCA Evaluation Team, Northern's president appointed an eleven member Steering Committee for the self-study process, to be chaired jointly by an administrator and a faculty member. The committee included faculty, administrators, support staff, career service personnel, alumni, community members, and students. Meeting twice a month, the Steering Committee supervised the self-study processes, worked with appointed task forces, monitored progress reported from five working groups, reviewed materials and data collected at regular intervals, and oversaw the preparation of the Self-Study Report. The committee disseminated information about the self-study to community constituencies through regular campus NCA newsletters, electronic messages, and general campus meetings and forums.

The Steering Committee's objectives were to ensure that: 1) the self-study provided an accurate portrayal of the institution; 2) the self-study process involved a comprehensive and reliable evaluation of how well the institution fulfills its purposes; and 3) the process included an active involvement of the entire campus and related constituencies in the accreditation process.

☐ Working Groups

The Steering Committee set up five working groups, one for each of the five NCA criteria. Invited to participate by the president, the members of each working group included one staff member, two faculty members, one administrator, a community member and/or alumnus, one student, and one Steering Committee liaison. The liaisons from the Steering Committee, who attended the 1995 NCA Annual Meeting and sessions related to their respective criteria, provided appropriate guidance for group planning and work, communicated Steering Committee directions, and participated in the preparation of the working group report.

Each working group focused on the assigned NCA criterion, compiling and studying evidence that demonstrated institutional strengths and revealed weaknesses related to that criterion. The primary purposes of each working group were to conduct a thorough investigation and prepare an analytical report including substantial evidence showing that the institution meets the assigned NCA criterion. Those reports were used as a resource for the preparation of the Self-Study Report.

Resource Room Task Force

The establishment of a task force to oversee the collection and display of materials in the Resource Room provided a means by which the entire campus community could have convenient electronic access to self-study documents. The task force included faculty and staff with expertise in library science, computer technology, and audio/visual technology.

Collection of Data and Dissemination of Information

Throughout the self-study processes, the Steering Committee, Self-Study Coordinators, and working groups conducted special investigations. These included unit self-studies, general campus forums, campus-wide focus group meetings, inservice meetings, and campus surveys.

Unit Self-Studies

All campus academic and non-academic units conducted mini self-studies, each filing an evaluation following the guidelines for the five NCA criteria. The unit self-studies were carried on approximately 15 months before the NCA team visit and played a vital role in creating interest in the self-study and familiarizing faculty, staff, and students with the five NCA criteria. A copy of the cover letter that accompanied the unit self-studies appears in the box below:

Mini Self-Studies for NCA

The North Central Accreditation self-study process should be considered a significant event in the life of Northern State University. By definition, the self-study calls for an analysis of the university by the various constituencies: administration, faculty, staff, students, alums, and community. A major priority of the Steering Committee is campus ownership of the self-study process. It is anticipated that this will be obtained by involving as many people as possible in the self-study.

In this phase of the study, the University's Steering Committee is asking that each unit or department become involved in a mini self-study. Each unit or department has been assigned a leader that is responsible for coordinating and writing up the results of the mini self-study. However, it is important that each member of the unit or department be an active participant in the discussion of the five criteria for accreditation. Please spend some time as a group discussing each of the five criteria and complete a written summary of the responses. In addition, each unit or department is asked to identify strengths and weaknesses and to propose recommendations for change.

The responses should be single-spaced and brief (no more than one-half page for each criterion). Please return the completed mini self-study via e-mail attachment, Word Perfect 5.1, to the Steering Committee by September 15, 1995. Where documentation is available, please make note in the report and have the material available for collection by the Steering Committee. Thank you for your cooperation.

A total of 46 unit self-studies were filed with the Steering Committee. The self-studies were grouped according to academic schools and colleges as well as non-academic departments and then summarized. These summaries served as guides for the five working groups.

☐ General Campus Forums

During general campus forums attended by faculty, staff, and students Steering Committee members furnished information concerning the progress of the self-study. In addition, during the first forum, questionnaires were distributed and the results compiled and analyzed. Questions included:

- ◇ What do you consider to be three notable strengths of our institution?
- ◇ A purpose of the NCA self-study is institutional analysis and improvement. In view of that purpose, what do you consider to be the three most important institutional issues or challenges that NSU's self-study should address?
- ◇ What recommendations or realistic solutions do you think the Self-Study Report should present to address the issues you identified above?
- ◇ An institutional self-study should involve all constituencies of the university. Everyone should know what is happening and should have an opportunity to contribute. Do you think that NSU's self-study work is accomplishing those goals? (Yes/No). If not, what would you suggest?

The general campus forums were very effective in: (1) keeping university personnel informed on the progress of the self-study; (2) providing university personnel an opportunity to participate in the self-study; and (3) allowing the Steering Committee to compare previous findings with comments of university personnel.

☐ Focus Groups

Upon approval and support by the Steering Committee, Working Group One initiated a series of campus-wide focus-group meetings involving community members, faculty, staff, and students. The purpose of the focus groups was to obtain a collective perception of the mission and purposes of the university.

A total of eight focus groups met with two groups each of students, faculty, staff, and community members. The groups ranged in size from 8 to 15 members. An attempt was made to obtain a cross-section of the target groups.

Each of the focus groups was scheduled to meet for two hours including approximately 30 minutes for the serving of meals. The facilitator used a set of core questions with each group. Core questions included the following:

- ◇ What do you see as the mission of Northern State University?
- ◇ How is the mission demonstrated?
- ◇ Based on the mission, what is NSU's greatest resource need?
- ◇ Do we do what we say we are doing, accurately, honestly, and fairly?
- ◇ Do you have confidence that NSU will fulfill its mission?
- ◇ Do you see NSU as committed to excellence in both the teaching provided by faculty and the learning expected of students?

Working Group One summarized the results of the focus group meetings and an analysis of the results was made by the Steering Committee. Comments made by focus groups substantiated many of the findings of all five working groups

☐ Inservice Meetings

The week prior to the beginning of fall classes consists of inservice activities for both faculty and staff. During both the fall of 1995 and the fall of 1996 one complete day was set aside for use by the Steering Committee.

The 1995 inservice included a visit by the university's NCA staff liaison and the program included the following.

Day	Time	Function
Day one	6:00 P.M.	Dinner meeting (NCA liaison and self-study coordinators)
Day two	8:45 A.M.	University President welcomes faculty and staff
	9:00 A.M.	NCA liaison address to faculty and staff
	10:30 A.M.	Reports by the five working groups
	1:00 P.M.	Liaison meets with working groups while faculty/ staff work of unit self-studies
	3:30 P.M.	Question/Answer session (Steering Committee and liaison)

Upon review of the inservice sessions, the Steering Committee agreed that the visit by the NCA staff liaison provided useful direction for the entire campus and more specifically for the five working groups. The NCA liaison encouraged Steering Committee members and working group members to contact him by phone if they had additional questions about the self-study.

The 1996 inservice consisted of an overview of the progress of the self-study and the Self-Study Report. The schedule included:

Time	Function
9:00 A.M.	Importance of NCA self-study (University President)
9:30 A.M.	What has happened thus far? (Self-Study Coordinator)
10:00 A.M.	Concerns of 1987 evaluation team (Steering Committee member)
10:45 A.M.	Overview of what team visit will involve (experienced Consultant/ Evaluator)
11:15 A.M.	Strengths and challenges (Steering Committee member)
1:30 P.M.	Sample evaluation team questions (Steering Committee member)
2:00 P.M.	Progress of assessment at the university (Director of Assessment)

The Steering Committee received several positive comments about the inservice sessions and felt that it served to not only inform the campus of the progress of the self-study but created enthusiasm for the visit that was scheduled in about two months.

Campus Surveys

The following surveys were an important part of the collection of data for the self-study: (1) Working Group Two conducted a campus-wide survey of all members of existing committees; (2) Working Group Five carried out an e-mail survey of integrity issues on campus; and (3) the Steering Committee constructed an extensive questionnaire that was distributed to all faculty, staff, and selected students. Ninety-one (60 percent) of the faculty, 108 (65 percent) of the staff, and 342 students responded to the Steering Committee's surveys. The results of each of the surveys were analyzed and provided comprehensive information for the Self-Study Report. In addition, the surveys allowed all constituencies regular input into the self-study processes.

Consultant

Approximately eight months before the NCA evaluation team visit, an educator with several years experience as a consultant-evaluator, made a two-day visit to the NSU campus. In addition to reading the draft of the Self-Study Report and the 1987 Team Report, the consultant conducted mock interviews of constituency groups during his visit. He provided the Steering Committee with advice regarding work that needed to be completed, areas of concern requiring more attention in the report, and general ideas for the preparation for the visit.

Newsletter

A newsletter, *NCA UPDATE*, was published monthly beginning one year before the scheduled NCA evaluation team visit to keep the university community informed of the progress of the NCA self-study. The *NCA UPDATE* contained editorials, interviews, reader's comments, monthly time schedules, and a contest section. The contest prizes consisted of mugs and coffee/roll and numerous entries were received from the entire campus community. Examples of *NCA UPDATE* articles include:

- An Interview with Working Group Chair
- Importance of NCA Self-Study
- Recognition of Self-Study Committee Members
- Responses of the Eight Focus Groups
- A Student's View of NCA Self-Study
- Assessment and NCA
- Changes since 1987 (previous team visit)
- Progress with Assessment
- Description of NCA Evaluation Team

Executive Summary

After muchdiscussion, the Steering Committee agreed that most of the faculty and staff would not have or take the time to read the entire Self-Study Report. Thus, approximately three months before the team visit and before the Self-Study Report was printed, the Steering Committee distributed the *Executive Summary of the Self- Study Report* to faculty, staff, members of the Student Senate, and members of the Graduate Student Association. The Executive Summary contained a synopsis of each of the chapters of the Self-Study Report as well as a listing of strengths and challenges that had been addressed in each chapter. The eight-page summary gave all interested parties an opportunity to quickly review the report and, if any point caught their eye, examine the item more thoroughly in the actual report.

Conclusion

When the NCA evaluation team arrived on campus in November of 1996, the entire campus community was not only aware of the visit, but very familiar with the findings of the institutional self-study. Faculty, staff, students, and community members were well acquainted with the strengths and concerns of the university because they had played a large role in the self-study. The entire campus community had opportunity to 1) serve on self-study committees (Steering Committee, Working Groups, and Resource Room Task Force); 2) conduct self-studies of their own department or unit (Unit Self-Studies); 3) participate in campus meetings (General Forums, Focus Groups, and inservice meetings); 4) respond to campus surveys and questionnaires (committee survey, integrity survey, and university-wide questionnaire); and 5) be continuously informed of the progress and findings of the self-study (visit of consultant, Newsletter and Executive Summary). The exit report of the Evaluation Team and the positive reactions of the university community left no doubt that there had been campus ownership of the entire self-study process.

References

Handbook of Accreditation, 1994-96. Chicago, IL: North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (1994).

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Data Collection for the Self-Study

William L. Hooper

A new Self-Study Coordinator faces a difficult task when planning for data collection and evaluation in the Self-Study Report. The Coordinator must determine what data need to be collected, where data can be found, how data can be collected, how data should be evaluated, and how and what data to include in the written report. With the emphasis the North Central Association places upon data that support patterns of evidence that the institution is achieving its mission and objectives, data collection becomes a vital part of the self-study.

The self-study needs two types of data. One type is general information found in the institutional catalog, faculty handbook, and similar places. The other type is statistical information that requires the use of collection instruments. Both types of data need to be described and evaluated. Without evaluation of data there is no way to make judgments about where the institution is and where it ought to be.

Data Needs for the Self-Study

The first need is information about students. This includes data about enrollment trends, retention rates, and graduation rates by school, division, and department over a five-year period. Student achievement needs to be studied by asking questions such as:

- How is student achievement assessed?
- What do the results of assessment indicate about the quality of education programs?
- To what extent are students satisfied with their programs of study and campus life?
- What are recruitment and admissions policies?
- Does the institution maintain integrity in its recruitment and admissions policies?
- What are institutional policies on student financial assistance?
- How are student financial accounts maintained?
- Does the institution maintain integrity in its management of student accounts?
- What is the organization of student academic advisement?
- Is academic advising effective?

A second need is information about the faculty. This includes biographical information, educational preparation and attainments, and professional attainments. In addition, information about faculty compensation, faculty evaluation, faculty role in governance, and faculty role in determining course and degree requirements should be included. The faculty handbook, faculty job descriptions, and other pertinent information can be made available in the documents room for access by the evaluation team.

A third type of information needed is about instructional programs:

- What is the number and level of course offerings?
- Is there any duplication of courses among departments, divisions, or schools?

- What is the average class size?
- What majors are offered and what are the requirements for each major?
- What is the general education component of degree programs?
- What evidence is there that general education outcomes permeate the curriculum?
- What are the requirements for the various degrees?
- How are decisions made about which courses, majors, and degrees are offered?
- What is the annual intake for each major at the freshman level?
- What are retention and graduation rates for each major?
- What is the evidence of the quality of academic programs?

A primary indication that an institution is achieving its objectives is the quality and success of its alumni. This can be demonstrated by compiling an alumni profile, showing degrees earned, post-graduate academic and professional achievements, and job satisfaction. Perhaps the most helpful data are those that ask alumni to evaluate their educational experience in terms of job preparation.

- What would be the ideal preparation for the job they currently hold?
- How does that ideal preparation match the preparation they received?
- What do they think the college or university can do to strengthen academic programs?

Another need is information about institutional financial resources:

- What are the fees and tuition?
- How dependent is the institution upon tuition as a source of income?
- What fundraising activities are employed and what is the cost-per-dollar of fundraising?
- What auxiliary enterprises does the institution operate and what contribution do these make to the overall operating income?
- How are budget decisions made?
- How are financial resources managed and by whom?

These data need to be evaluated in terms of institutional long-term financial viability.

The Collection of Data

Once needs are determined, where does one go to find the data? The first step in data collection is to determine what data are needed for the self-study. One means of discovering what data are needed is a data-needs chart, which matches data needs with data sources. Use the Basic Institutional Data forms as a beginning point. What data are needed? Where are they located? Who can furnish data? If not readily available, how can we get data?

The next step is to discover what data have already been collected. Since most institutions have some type of data-processing system, the next step would be to become acquainted with whomever is in charge of the system. Learn how the system works: how data are put into the system, how extensive the data are that have been collected, and in what forms data can be retrieved from the system. One need not have computer skills to understand this. It is only necessary to know the system's limitations for generating the desired data. Otherwise, the Self-Study Committee may expect to receive data that cannot be obtained.

If a campus is computerized, the main computer system probably holds data that pertain to the institution as a whole. However, various departments may collect and utilize data that are not down-loaded on the main data-collection system. Learn to find the resources available in various offices and departments.

Unless the college or university has a person responsible for collecting and processing institutional data on a regular basis, the data desired might not be in a ready-made usable form. Self-Study Committee personnel may need to pull data together from many different sources and put them into a form that can be used in the self-study.

The third step is the determination of collection methods:

- ◇ Do we need questionnaires?
- ◇ Can they be purchased or do we need to devise them?
- ◇ Do we have the necessary expertise on the committee or among the faculty to devise questionnaires?
- ◇ Do we need access to a spreadsheet package on a computer?
- ◇ What clerical help do we need for data tabulation?
- ◇ Do we need to assign specific data to be collected by individual committee members?

When the Self-Study Committee collects data by questionnaire it is at the mercy of other people. Those being surveyed may not appreciate the importance of the exercise or why it is essential for them to return the instrument. Therefore, it is necessary to make a timeline for the completion of data collection. This should allow for follow-up notices and reminders.

One resource for collecting personal data about faculty members is a biographical information sheet that each faculty member fills out. The institution's personnel office may already have these type of data.

Other information about faculty members can usually be secured through a dean's office. This would include data about compensation, rank, and tenure of individual faculty members; the number and percentage of faculty by rank, gender, and age; the percentage of faculty members with doctorates by rank, gender, and age; the length of tenure by rank, gender, and age; student evaluations of faculty members; peer and administrative evaluations of faculty members; faculty members' professional growth plans; and the institutional policy relative to faculty development. Samples of these data could be included in the Resource Room available to the NCA evaluation team.

Most student information can be gleaned from registrar office files or the registrar module on the data base. Retention and graduation rates, student satisfaction, and student achievement are essential to any evaluation of academic programs.

Student retention cannot be calculated apart from a name-by-name, year-by-year tracking of each student. Retention rates will not be accurate if the first term of entry and the entering classification of students are not accurate. It is possible that a student will be approved for admission to one term but actually start attendance during another term. Or, a student may be classified as a transferring sophomore when in reality she is a first-time freshman. Transfer students need to be put into a separate category from first-time freshmen. What is the retention of first-time freshmen? Of transfer students? How do they compare and what does the comparison indicate?

As with calculating retention, graduation rates can be determined only if there is a semester-by-semester, year-by-year tracking of individual students. What is the graduation rate of first-time freshmen? Of transfer students? How do they compare and what does the comparison indicate?

Student satisfaction can be determined by using any one of a number of published questionnaires, or through a locally-produced questionnaire. Student achievement can be determined through standardized test scores used in a variety of ways, by noting the number of graduates passing professional examinations (such as the CPA, admission to the bar, or licensure), and the number of graduates being admitted to graduate schools.

Financial information about the institution can be secured from the office of financial affairs. This would include budget sheets, audited balance sheets, income generated, and expenditures. Taking these data the Self-Study Committee can calculate income and expenditures by course, department, division, and school. Of importance here is information that will show the total income and total expenditures, such as the cost of instruction (per student, per instructor, per course, per department, per division, per school), the cost of recruitment, the cost of maintenance, the cost of administration, and the cost of fundraising. After costs have been calculated, what is the ratio of income to expenditures allocated for instruction? What is the ratio of income to expenditures for maintenance?

These and other similar questions must be raised and answered about the financial condition of the institution. Two sources of help are the Higher Education Price Index and Minter Associates. The Higher Education Price Index (HEPI) works like the Consumer Price Index (CPI), except that it is based upon items peculiar to higher education rather than the normal consumer. The rate of inflation indicated by the HEPI may have little relation to the rate of inflation indicated by the CPI. Minter Associates takes data provided by the institution and does an exhaustive financial study of income/expenditures according to some 22 ratios. Such a study is worth the investment. However, a Self-Study Committee member with World Wide Web expertise can gain the same data from the Web.

The heart of an institution is its academic programs. Data can be secured, both internally and externally, that will indicate how well the institution is fulfilling its mission, through its academic programs. Internal data can be collected from faculty, department chairs, alumni, and current students. External data can be secured from professional organizations, visiting evaluators, professional accrediting associations, the community, and employers of alumni.

Using Data in the Self-Study

The purpose of data collection is to provide information for the institution to use to evaluate how well it is achieving its mission now and how well it can achieve its mission in the future. In the Self-Study Report, balance must be maintained between written descriptions of data on the one hand and visual exhibits of data on the other. When written commentary refers to a visual presentation the data should be as near the commentary as possible. Otherwise the reader loses the reference.

In most self-studies the collection of data is massive. Only data that give meaning to the written commentary should be included. Reference can be made to additional data that are available in an appendix to the Self-Study Report, a materials reference room, or a second data volume accompanying the Self-Study Report.

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The Collection, Analysis, and Dissemination of Institutional Data in Support of Institutional Self-Study

Robert L. Reid
Charles F. Harrington

Introduction

An institution's ability to measure reliably the congruence between the NCA Criteria for Accreditation and General Institutional Requirements (GIR) and the effectiveness and efficiency of its institutional operations is predicated on access to valid and reliable institutional data. An analysis of these data, both quantitative and qualitative, is essential for institutions to fulfill their charge of evaluating institutional compliance with accreditation criteria.

Data on all aspects of institutional operations, from enrollment behavior to cost-unit expenditure, are vital to a productive self-study. Longitudinal data, typically over eight to ten years, are necessary for an institution to assess its strategic and operational effectiveness. In addition, longitudinal comparative data are useful in addressing the institution's competitive position within its local, state, regional, and national context.

By certain means, an institution can more effectively and efficiently collect and analyze institutional data to support the self-study process. The development, analysis, and dissemination of data through commercial or in-house surveys, particularly including student learning outcomes assessment, are essential tasks for a strong self-study.

This paper outlines the method by which the University of Southern Indiana (UST) appointed and charged a committee with preparation of institutional data for institutional self-study. Recommendations are made as to how institutions might adopt and enhance this process for their own benefit.

The Self-Study Institutional Data Committee

At first sight, the collection and dissemination of institutional data and information in support of a self-study can be an overwhelming task for a self-study team. Perhaps the single most effective approach to amassing the necessary data expediently is to appoint a self-study steering subcommittee composed of information management professionals on your campus. The development of a self-study data committee can be a significant asset to the self-study endeavor, be it regionally or professionally mandated. Such a committee should include staff from the offices of institutional research, computer center, registrar, financial aid, advancement/development, human resources, academic affairs and business affairs. During our 1995-96 self-study process at the University of Southern Indiana, the Self-Study Data Committee met regularly to field requests for data and information from various self-study subcommittees.

Data Dissemination

The dissemination of institutional data and information to self-study subcommittees is an important process. Easy, unencumbered access to data should be a primary goal. Many institutions now have local area computer networks that provide a wonderful opportunity to disseminate data for self-study purposes. Spreadsheets, databases, and statistical reports can be made widely available by placing them, with unrestricted access, on the institutional computer network. Such broad access will help to ensure that all of the self-study writing committees are working from the same page. Since data and information should be made available early in the self-study process, we suggest that a Self-Study Data Committee be appointed as one of the first steps in the self-study process. This will ensure that self-study subcommittees and the Steering Committee itself have ample time to review, evaluate, and incorporate data into the Self-Study Report drafts.

In-House Survey Development

Throughout the self-study process, many campus units will be tempted to create and distribute their own client-user satisfaction surveys. While such efforts to measure campus levels of use and satisfaction with unit programs and services address issues of institutional unit effectiveness, there are dangers to an unorganized approach. These include contradictory data, inadequate sampling, and exhaustion of the respondents. To avoid inundating institutional constituents with numerous self-study surveys, we recommend that institutions develop a single, campus-wide, programs and services "client-satisfaction" survey. Such an instrument can be relatively broad in scope, addressing issues ranging from campus-wide level of familiarity with the institution's mission, to the degree and level of satisfaction with computer services, to the quality of institutional library holdings. One particularly important reason for centralizing an institution-wide satisfaction survey is to stem the temptation to skew the results in favor of the sponsoring institutional unit. Appropriate populations for surveying institutional quality and effectiveness may include full- and part-time faculty, administrative staff, support staff, alumni, community leaders, major employers of your graduates, and the current student body.

The University of Southern Indiana encountered outstanding success in adapting a well-known national survey to collect faculty-related data. Upon securing permission from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the University administered the *Survey of the Academic Profession,* which focused on how faculty spend their time, and how they feel about their students, their jobs, their profession, and the institution. The Foundation also granted permission to use the data it had collected with the survey, in the United States and internationally. The results provided a clear comparative picture of the University of Southern Indiana professorate and its views of the goals and stresses of institutional life.

Institutions need not reinvent the wheel when it comes to collecting data in support of institutional self-study. Most institutions engage in a broad array of data and information collection activities. The insight gained from these experiences should be used to supplement the self-study process. Using primarily the Office of Institutional Research, many institutions conduct ongoing surveys of entering freshmen, continuing students, student attrition, graduates (short and long-term), retention and attrition characteristics, student needs assessments, employer satisfaction, and student expectation. Data from these various activities are useful for self-study. Many institutions collect these data on a cyclical basis, thus providing solid baseline data for longitudinal comparison and analysis. Institutions that can document the degree to which they have modified programs and service based on previous assessment position themselves particularly well for the next self-study. At USI, the Self-Study Institutional Data Committee was able to review the many reports and surveys already in use, catalog them, and direct other self-study committees to appropriate data sources.

Institutions that engage in programs of ongoing academic program review should have a wealth of quantitative and qualitative data and information with which to supplement the self-study process. Data utilized in the process of accreditation with such associations as ACS, AASCB, NLN, NCATE, and others can benefit the NCA self-study process. Again, it is important that the Self-Study Institutional Data Committee disseminate information about the content and availability of such studies and reports.

Existing Sources of Institutional Data

Much of the data required in the self-study process may exist already in some form at an institution. In addition to the required annual NCA data forms, many institutions prepare routine institutional research reports addressing such areas as student headcount enrollment, credit hour production, faculty teaching load, faculty and staff employment trends, and financial expenditure trends among others. Institutional Fact Books are good supplemental resources. Institutional data collection for a self-study should support but not supersede existing information. Timely collection and dissemination of data is important, and the Self-Study Institutional Data Committee must provide leadership in this regard.

Institutions that participate in national data collection and dissemination initiatives have virtually unlimited access to institutional peer data. For example, retention projects such as the AASCU-Sallie Mae Retention Project, the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange (CSRDE), and the NCAA Persistence and Graduation Rate Survey collect and disseminate retention and graduation rate data on a variety of student cohorts.

Many Internet sites also serve as useful data warehouses. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), WICHE, John Minter Associates, and others routinely make data on enrollment trends, retention and graduation rates, IPEDS responses, and academic program data readily available and downloadable.

The Use of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Data

In 1995, the Commission mandated that all institutions holding candidacy or accredited status be required to submit an *Assessment Plan Report* to measure student learning outcomes in partial fulfillment of the Criteria for Accreditation. To this end, most institutions have an assessment plan in place, or are in the processes of developing and implementing one.

Existing student learning outcomes assessment data are ideal resources to supplement the Self-Study Report. Data pertaining to academic placement scores, SAT scores, and institutional grade point average are useful. Many institutions include data from their administration of standardized academic assessment tests such as the ETS Academic Profile, ACT Comp Objective test, ETS Major Field Test, Pre-Professional Skills Test (PPST), College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ), student satisfaction surveys, departmental curriculum content surveys, employer surveys, and community surveys. Institutions that have professional programs, such as nursing, health professions, and education, frequently include data relative to their students' passing rates on professional certification exams. These include graduate school admissions exams such as the GRE, GMAT, NCATE, LSAT, and MCAT. Other schools and programs may use portfolio assessment techniques to provide evidence of student learning outcomes. Institutions must be able to provide evidence that the assessment plan is being implemented. Data of the sort noted here are essential for such documentation.

Team Visit and Follow-up Support

Institutional research support for the evaluation team's on-campus visit is strongly recommended. Inevitably, members of the NCA evaluation team request data and information necessary to supplement their evaluation. Having institutional research staff available to address such requests can go a long way in making sure that the actual team visit runs smoothly.

The Office of Institutional Research should have the opportunity to review the team's draft report, following the exit session. Since the draft report is to be reviewed for accuracy in statement of facts, the IR office is a logical support unit, as it is typically an institution's repository for data and information on virtually all aspects of institutional operation. The use of the Institutional Self-Study Data Committee provides opportunity for a considered institutional response.

Summary

An institution's ability to access, analyze, and disseminate data and information pertaining to its own effectiveness and efficiency can greatly enhance the self-study process. Data should be broad gauged and address virtually every aspect of the institution from enrollment behavior to expenditure patterns. Data and information utilized in the self-study process may be readily accessible from existing surveys, reports, and other professional accreditation-related self-studies. An Institutional Data Committee can help provide ready access to this information and coordinate surveys and other forms of data collection.

Data must be disseminated widely in the self-study process to ensure the unencumbered access necessary to expedite a thorough assessment of the institution. Based on the University of Southern Indiana's experience, in preparing to undertake institutional self-study, we suggest that Self-Study Coordinators appoint an institutional data committee, charged with the collection and dissemination of data and information requisite for self-study.

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Using Assessment to Drive the Self-Study Process

Kathleen A. O'Hara
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Conducting a comprehensive continuing accreditation self-study can be an overwhelming challenge for any institution. It can be even more difficult in the absence of concrete, practical advice or examples from other institutions. This paper will describe the process used by one community college and offer suggestions about lessons learned along the way. It is intended to serve as a resource for institutions about to embark upon their own self-studies.

Johnson County Community College (JCCC) is a comprehensive, single-campus, suburban community college located in Overland Park, Kansas, in the greater Kansas City metropolitan area. The college was founded in 1969 and occupied its present 240-acre campus in 1972. JCCC enrolls approximately 15, 500 credit students each semester and serves an additional 16,000 individuals in continuing education programs and courses annually. The college offers a full range of general education/transfer preparation, career/occupational, and developmental courses as well as a wide array of student and support services to meet the diverse needs of its students. In 1972, JCCC was granted candidate status by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The college was first accredited by NCA in 1975 and granted continued accreditation in 1980 and 1986.

Over the last ten years, JCCC has experienced an 83.3% enrollment increase, added seven buildings to the campus, instituted policies designed to maximize student success, expanded its educational partnerships (most notably with Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad), and continually improved educational programming. The chapters of the self-study describe and evaluate these changes.

Given North Central's emphasis on assessment of student academic achievement and institutional effectiveness, it seemed reasonable to approach the continuing accreditation process from the perspective of using primarily existing research, evaluation, and assessment procedures and results as the foundation upon which to build a successful self-study. Of course, using evaluation and assessment to drive the self-study assumes that those procedures and results are in place—creating them only for the self-study is an impossible task, given their comprehensive nature. Thus, this way of designing and carrying out a continuing accreditation self-study requires several years of planning and implementation of assessment procedures, in addition to the two to three years ordinarily required for the study itself.

JCCC faculty and administrative staff have a long history of using institutional research and evaluation data to inform planning, budgeting, and management decision-making to improve teaching, the curriculum, and delivery of services to students. As a result, for some time, JCCC has had in place a comprehensive model to assess institutional effectiveness. The components of this model are:

- **Career student follow-up:** conducted one and four years after career program students complete a program (i.e., earn a degree or certificate) or leave with "marketable skills." Both telephone and mail surveys assess former students' career and life progress, the degree to which they accomplished their educational objectives, perceptions of growth in a variety of cognitive and noncognitive areas, and evaluations of their instructional program and other college programs and services. Employers of former career students are also surveyed by mail to determine their evaluations of the training and preparation those students received at JCCC.

- **Transfer student follow-up:** conducted approximately one year after students transfer from JCCC to a four-year college or university. These former students are identified by the transfer institution and then surveyed by mail to determine their evaluations of their transfer preparation at JCCC, evaluation of

JCCC programs and services compared to those at the transfer institution, perceptions of cognitive and noncognitive outcomes, and the degree to which students accomplish their educational objectives at the community college. In addition, the college is establishing a transfer student data base that will allow compilation of GPA's, baccalaureate graduation rates, and the like.

- **Educational objective "Leaver" surveys:** directed at those students who neither complete a career program nor transfer to a four-year college or university, but come to the community college for a variety of other reasons. Leavers are identified by comparison of enrollment files from three consecutive semesters. Transfer students and career program completers are then deleted. The resulting students are surveyed by mail and/or telephone approximately one year after leaving the college. Again, the surveys address accomplishment of educational objectives, perceptions of cognitive and noncognitive outcomes, and evaluations of JCCC programs and services.

- **Cognitive outcomes assessment:** coordinated by the college Outcomes Assessment Committee. The committee has formulated a college-wide plan for assessment of cognitive outcomes and taken as its charge the identification and assessment of measurable general education outcomes. Outcomes definition and assessment in developmental courses and at the discipline level in career programs have been assigned to the faculty in those areas.

- **Systematic program review:** all college programs and services, including credit and continuing education instruction, student services, and other academic, administrative, and support services rotate through a five-year program review cycle. Separate evaluation packets have been created for career programs, transfer programs, continuing education programs, and administrative/student services programs. The program review process is coordinated by the Office of Institutional Research and occurs annually from August through January.

- **Student evaluation of instructors and counselors:** separate evaluation systems are utilized for instructors and counselors each semester. Results are provided to the individuals evaluated and to appropriate administrators.

- **Grade/attrition report;** Drop survey: grade distributions and attrition rates for all credit classes are compiled by section and instructor each semester. Relevant information from this report is brought to the attention of the Dean of Instruction and the appropriate divisional assistant deans. In addition, all students who drop a course during the semester are asked to complete a short survey detailing the reasons for their withdrawal. These data are compiled annually in a report provided to college academic administrators.

- **Client/user evaluation surveys:** The Office of Institutional Research conducts periodic client/user evaluation surveys of student services (e.g., counseling, admissions, financial aid, career center), auxiliary services (food service, bookstore, housekeeping/maintenance), the library, open labs (e.g., the instructional data processing lab), resource centers (e.g., the math resource center, academic achievement center), and continuing education/cultural events and activities (audience surveys, focus groups). Reports of results are provided to appropriate administrators and include longitudinal comparisons with results from prior years.

Thus, with one important exception, assessment and evaluation methodologies were already in place to provide the self-study committees with the information they needed to do their work, and therefore, also "drive" (or certainly guide and inform) the JCCC self-study. The only major data collection effort that was not a part of the college's ongoing institutional effectiveness assessment efforts involved a series of organizational climate surveys of faculty, staff, and students that were conducted prior to the onset of the self-study by the college with the assistance of an external consulting firm. Thus, the various self-study committees were able to use readily available research, evaluation, and assessment data as they went about their tasks of evaluating the degree to which JCCC has accomplished its mission.

Chronology of the Self-Study Process

JCCC's self-study document represents the efforts of more than 200 faculty, staff, students, and community members. The self-study process began in the spring of 1994 with the appointment of the co-chairs and concluded in the summer of 1996 with the preparation of the final document for publication. The following chronology provides an overview of the activities involved in the self-study.

☐ Spring 1994

The college president appointed the self-study co-chairs: Jeff Seybert, Director of Research, Evaluation, and Instructional Development, and Kathy O'Hara, faculty chair of the assessment committee. The co-chairs met with the president and two other college staff members, the deans of instruction and continuing education, to discuss the philosophy of the college's self-study process. The president and the two deans also serve as NCA consultant-evaluators, and their advice was invaluable in helping the co-chairs conceptualize the shift from a descriptive to an evaluative self-study, as required by current NCA guidelines. From the beginning, all involved agreed that the study would be conducted in an open and forthright manner and that there were sufficient data from existing evaluation and assessment procedures to ensure an honest examination of the college. Based on these discussions, the co-chairs developed an outline of the components of the study, taking into consideration the five NCA evaluative criteria as well as the General Institutional Requirements (GIR's) and the organization of the most recent previous self-study. The preliminary outline was revised to incorporate feedback from the college's NCA liaison. The final outline is shown below.

Section I	**Introduction**	
	Chapter 1:	Overview
	Chapter 2:	General Institutional Requirements
	Chapter 3:	Response to 1986 NCA Report
Section II	**Criterion I:**	**Mission and Purposes**
	Chapter 4:	History and Mission
Section III	**Criterion 2:**	**Human, Financial, and Physical Resources**
	Chapter 5:	Organization and Governance
	Chapter 6:	Institutional Services
	Chapter 7:	Human Resources and Staff Development
	Chapter 8:	Information Services
	Chapter 9:	Financial Resources
	Chapter 10:	Physical Resources
Section IV	**Criterion 3:**	**Institution Accomplishing its Purposes**
	Chapter 11:	General Education
	Chapter 12:	Transfer Programs
	Chapter 13:	Career Programs
	Chapter 14:	Continuing Education, Community Services, and Economic Development
	Chapter 15:	Developmental Education
	Chapter 16:	Students and Student Services
	Chapter 17:	Assessment of Student Academic Achievement and Institutional Effectiveness

Section V. Criterion 4: Institution Can Continue to Accomplish its Purposes
Chapter 18: Planning

Section VI. Criterion 5: Integrity in Practice and Relationships
Chapter 19: Integrity

Section VII. Summary
Chapter 20: Strengths, Concerns, Recommendations

Appendices: Basic Institutional Data Forms, JCCC Committees

☐ Fall 1994

After the preliminary planning was complete, the steering committee members were appointed so that they could assist with the remainder of the self-study planning. The co-chairs recommended that the steering committee be a "working" committee comprised of the chairs of the committees charged with studying the various aspects of the college's mission. The committees were determined from the outline shown above. The co-chairs further recommended that the chairs of these study committees be individuals who were not the supervisors or managers directly responsible for particular areas and that they come primarily from faculty ranks. The college administration agreed with this plan and invited the selected individuals to serve. The composition of the steering committee is shown below.

Self-Study Committee	Chair
Career Preparation	Faculty member, Dental hygiene program
Continuing Ed/Culture	Administrative staff member, Continuing ed
Developmental Ed	Faculty member, Reading program
Economic Devel/Bus Coop	Assistant dean, Continuing ed
Fiscal Resources	Administrative staff member, Budget
General Education	Faculty member, Mathematics program
Human Resources	Administrative staff member, Benefits
Information Services	Administrative staff member, Network services
Institutional Services	Administrative staff member, Institutional research
Organization/Governance	Faculty member, Paralegal program
Physical Resources	Faculty member, Business/Technologies division
Staff/Professional Devel	Faculty member, English program
Students/Student Services	Administrative staff member, Testing/Assessment
Transfer Education	Faculty member, Mathematics program
Writing Committee	Steering Committee co-chairs

In order to ensure that the membership of the committees represented all employee groups as well as students and community members, the co-chairs and the steering committee identified a core of individuals to serve on each committee. This list was reviewed by the faculty association and others before the college president invited this core of committee members to serve. In addition, the steering committee agreed to organize the content of the respective chapters using the following headings: brief description (of the area studied by the committee); evaluation based on available research and assessment data; summary of strengths, concerns, and recommendations.

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☐ Spring 1995

The college officially launched the self-study process with a luncheon for the steering committee. In addition, membership on the various study committees was opened to any interested member of the college community. The committee rosters were finalized, and, in the end, more than 200 members of the college community served on committees. Each of the committees met before the end of the semester to plan and organize the process of examining the components of the college's mission for which they were responsible. The co-chairs attended each of these initial committee meetings. Most of the study committees decided to divide into subcommittees, each assigned a specific task to contribute to the committee's chapter. Each of the committees was provided with the following materials: current college catalog; previous Self-Study Report and Team Report; current NCA handbook; and a list of evaluation, research, and assessment reports available from the Office of Institutional Research (OIR).

The steering committee emphasized to the study committees the importance of thorough and open examination in the self-study process. The evaluative, rather than descriptive, nature of the study was stressed. The following principles guided the self-study:

- ◇ Although the self-study process would be a thorough investigation of college departments, the self-study document would reflect an overall evaluation of the degree to which the institution was accomplishing its mission and satisfying the five NCA criteria.
- ◇ Conclusions regarding strengths, concerns, and recommendations would be based on patterns of evidence rather than hearsay, rumor, or anecdotal information.
- ◇ The self-study process would yield meaningful information that the college could use to improve its ability to carry out its mission as well as illustrate to NCA consultant-evaluators that the college was deserving of continuing accreditation.

☐ Summer 1995

Many of the committees used this time to review the myriad assessment reports and other documents related to their charges. They identified points for discussion in the evaluation sections of the chapters.

☐ Fall 1995

Committees continued their investigations and began to finalize their respective chapters. The Steering Committee met twice per month to discuss issues that arose in committees. Common areas of concern included the time frame of the study, how to include modifications that were currently underway, how much detail to include, how to address issues raised anecdotally, and how much description to include. As the committees completed their chapters, the Steering Committee reviewed them, making suggestions to improve clarity. The Steering Committee agreed that major, conceptual revisions would be completed by the committees, but minor grammatical and stylistic revisions would be completed by the Writing Committee. The goal of the Steering Committee was to have a relatively polished draft, at least in terms of content, of all the chapters completed by the end of the semester. Approximately half of the committees met this goal.

☐ Spring 1996

The Steering Committee continued to meet to finalize the first complete draft of the Self-Study Report. Originally, the co-chairs and the Steering Committee had planned to provide every member of the college community with this draft in order to solicit widespread feedback. After consulting with the staff in the college's publications office, it became apparent that it would be too costly both in terms of human as well as financial resources to follow through with that plan. The Steering Committee decided to provide individual copies to all those who served on committees and all administrators on campus and to provide an appropriate number of copies for each office and/or department and the library to be shared by anyone else who was interested. In addition, anyone who desired an individual copy could request one. This draft was also sent to the college's NCA staff liaison. This first draft was distributed toward the end of the semester. The Steering Committee received comments from approximately 30 individuals. All comments were reviewed and incorporated, if appropriate, into a second draft, which was distributed in essentially the same manner as the first draft.

☐ Summer 1996

After receiving additional feedback, the Writing Committee began the proofreading and editing process. The document was reviewed for consistent style and usage, as well as for repetition of content between chapters. A final draft was prepared and reviewed by the co-chairs who, in collaboration with the administrative staff person, made final layout and binding suggestions. Also at this time, the co-chairs and administrative staff person reviewed and finalized the documents for the Resource Room. A Resource Room guide was prepared for the team members. In addition, the co-chairs prepared a brochure for members of the college community to remind them of the upcoming team visit and answer commonly-asked questions. This brochure also contained the tentative meeting schedule of the NCA team.

☐ Fall 1996

The college president and the designated support staff person finalized the preparations for the team visit. Travel, lodging, gift baskets, and other arrangements for the visit were completed. The co-chairs served as hosts during the team visit, responding to last minute changes in the schedule as well as requests by the team for any additional documentation. In October, the college received a very favorable exit report in which the NCA team cited the college's plan to assess student academic achievement as "exemplary" and one of the institution's five major strengths. The entire college was invited to a reception held the evening of the last day of the team visit, and the Steering Committee was treated to a "wrap-up" luncheon shortly thereafter. The entire self-study process came to a close with the co-chairs and the college administration reviewing the official Team Report for accuracy of fact.

"Tips" and "Traps"

The following suggestions are based upon reflection of the self-study process used at JCCC—what worked well and what could have been improved.

- ◇ Steering Committee members, if they serve as study committee chairs as the JCCC Steering Committee did, should receive at least three credit hours of reassigned time if they are faculty, or the equivalent if they are staff. JCCC did provide three-fourths reassignment for the faculty co-chair and provided compensation for adjunct faculty and part-time staff who served on committees, but full-time faculty were not compensated for any committee work, and Steering Committee members completed their self-study duties in addition to their other college responsibilities. This proved to be an enormous task.

- ◇ The JCCC committee late-fall timelines for completion of first drafts of reports would have been more completely met if the committees had better utilized the time available in the summer of 1995. That summer time proved to be critical because beginning the process too much in advance of the team visit likely would have resulted in the committees reviewing dated documents and forming inaccurate conclusions (which would have been the case had they started earlier). By relying significantly on the fall semester for both review and evaluation of assessment information, the committees felt a serious "time crunch" toward the end of that semester.

- ◇ Small tokens of appreciation given at strategic times throughout the self-study process to those involved are a great idea. Cafeteria coupons, refreshments at meetings, notes from the college president, and verbal encouragement from the co-chairs help maintain enthusiasm.

- ◇ Readily available assessment information is invaluable to the committee members. Any institution that does little assessment should address this prior to beginning a self-study. The Steering Committee should not be required to initiate an institutional assessment program in order to conduct a thorough self-study.

- ◇ Involving or providing the opportunity for involvement of all members of the college community makes the process proceed more smoothly. Keeping everyone informed of the progress at staff and in-service meetings and providing every individual with access to drafts of the document guards against any last minute "surprises."
- ◇ Strong leadership skills are essential for the co-chairs. Also, the co-chairs and Steering Committee members should be respected by the college community. If the co-chairs do not possess extremely strong writing skills, one member of the writing committee should be designated as responsible for the final proofreading and layout suggestions.
- ◇ Strong clerical support is essential. This person should be a full-time staff member who is extremely skilled in word processing, but even more importantly, well-versed in the policies and procedures of the college and well-known to both the college administration as well as the faculty and staff.
- ◇ The college should be committed at all levels from the top administration to faculty, staff, students, and community members to an open investigation based on evidence. The study should not "sugar-coat" or exaggerate concerns. Conclusions should be based on data, not "perception."
- ◇ The time frame of a self-study can be a "moving target." JCCC's Steering Committee found it helpful to add last minute updates or "notes" at the end of chapters to indicate areas in which the college had already taken or was taking action regarding a recommendation made in the self-study. The NCA team commented favorably on this approach, stating that it was a positive sign for them to see that the institution was already implementing some of the items suggested in the self-study.
- ◇ Although the self-study document must be kept to a manageable length (i.e., not much longer than 200 pages), when in doubt, more information rather than less should be included in the self-study and/or appendices.
- ◇ The NCA Annual Meetings and staff liaison are excellent sources of information and guidance.

In conclusion, a successful self-study can occur if there is strong leadership from those on the Steering Committee, support from college administration, adequate assessment in place at the institution, excellent clerical assistance, and good communication between the college and the NCA.

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Writing an Evaluative Self-Study Report

Diane O. Tebbetts

The most important purpose of self-study is institutional improvement. Active committees, representative of all constituencies and guided by the Steering Committee, can make a vital contribution to the process of improvement by carefully investigating their assigned areas, discovering and recording relevant facts, and then moving on to make judgments. Committee reports should be geared toward helping the institution take advantage of its strengths and address its weaknesses. The Self-Study Report must reflect this vital process of investigation and direction-setting and present it to two rather different audiences: the "insider" audience of college employees, board members, students, and other constituents, who can use the report as an inventory of their institution's current status and as a planning guide; and the "outsider" audience of NCA Consultant-Evaluators and Commissioners who will decide whether the college gains or retains a particular accreditation status. The Self-Study Report may well be the most important tool for making a case with these two audiences, justifying to the former ("insiders") the need for change and the priorities for changes, and making the college's case with the latter ("outsiders") that it is an accreditable entity. While accomplishing both of these purposes requires an evaluative self-study, this paper mainly addresses how the Self-Study Report can best meet the needs of the NCA evaluation team.

The Self-Study Report as an Image Builder

The aim of Self-Study Coordinators should be to use the Self-Study Report to present a defensible image of their college as serious, honest, dependable, capable, and effective. In reading the report, the NCA Consultant-Evaluators form opinions both of the college itself as an institution and of the people who undertook the process of self-study. By the time the team arrives on campus, a vital first impression already exists, and while C-Es will certainly be open to reassessing the validity of their impressions, they use the visit mainly as an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of what they have already read. The Self-Study Report must, therefore, paint a convincing picture that the college in question meets all GIRs and the five Criteria for Accreditation so that the visit becomes confirmation of a positive impression rather than a critical investigation of unsupported claims or a time-consuming search for omitted information.

In working through each section, the self-study editor should make it easy for readers to discover what they are supposed to know. Any assertion should be made clearly, "right up front," with proof following quickly in the form of facts, details, and examples that can be checked easily. Relevant documents should be cited and—if they are not included with the report, in an appendix, or in accompanying volumes, such as the college's catalog, strategic plan, or assessment plan--cataloged and exhibited in the Resource Room. This kind of consistent pairing of assertions and proof builds credibility both of the report and the college. The contents of each section of the Self-Study Report must illustrate that the college understands the Consultant-Evaluators' needs and knows which information satisfies those needs.

To be convincing, evaluative writing must judge its subject against stated standards, which may be either external or internal. Examples of external standards include such items as NCA statements about good assessment practice ("uses multiple measures," for instance), American Library Association expectations regarding numbers of volumes in libraries serving certain collegiate types and enrollments, or numbers of graduates per program per year required to satisfy individual states' productivity mandates. Internal standards include such things as the college mission statement, educational philosophy, or vision; desired student/faculty ratio; freshman-to-sophomore retention rate; or college policies on admission or good standing. Accreditation team members expect to see that a college has looked at itself thoroughly, accurately described what it found, evaluated those findings against some internal or external criteria, and then drawn conclusions about institutional strengths, weaknesses, and needs for improvement or change.

Where Committee Reports Fall Short

In the typical self-study process, separate committees produce reports related to various components of the final Self-Study Report. A Steering Committee usually oversees the process, often requesting additional information after committee reports are submitted, and usually determining which strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations are of sufficient importance to the institution as a whole to be included in the final Report. All too often, however, committee reports—and sometimes even the Self-Study Report itself—fall short in one or more of three different ways.

First, sweeping generalizations about the quality, adequacy, or inadequacy of the college in a particular area may lack adequate support. Neither advocacy nor opposition is convincing without solid data to support it. For example, a statement, such as, "The college has a thorough assessment plan, which produces valid information leading to institutional change," followed by a narrative describing how the assessment plan was developed, which consultants led workshops, how faculty have been involved, what the budget covers, where changes in assessment tools have been made over the past five years, and why the president supports the plan, is insufficient. While this kind of information may be useful, none of it indicates what is assessed, what kind of information the assessment yields, or how that information has been employed to improve student educational outcomes.

Second, and far more commonly, the narrative may present lengthy descriptions, lists, and tables of data without drawing any conclusions or evaluating the college's performance against internal or external criteria. An example of this kind of failure to exercise judgment would be a section dealing with human resources that presents page after page of pie charts, graphs, and tables showing enrollment trends, faculty characteristics, demographic data for the service area, projections of future high school enrollments, number of people employed in the student services sector, and on and on, but totally devoid of any judgment about whether numbers are "good news, bad news, or no news."

The third problem area results from inclusion of specific recommendations for action with no supporting data or evaluation included in the body of the report. Some committees even venture recommendations outside the scope of their assigned areas. It is important that all conclusions about strengths, weaknesses, and recommended actions flow directly and clearly from data already presented in the preceding narrative. Examples of poor practice include citing a need for additional classrooms and offices in the human resources section, rather than in the physical resources section, or listing recent acquisition of equipment for science laboratories as a strength in the appropriate section but failing to mention this new lab equipment anywhere else in the chapter.

Steps to an Evaluative Report

What steps must Self-Study Coordinators follow to end up with an evaluative Self-Study Report? First, they must give each committee an assignment that clearly delineate its area of responsibility. Second, they should ask each committee to begin with thorough descriptions of the college's current situation, citing examples, facts, and details. Third, they must involve committees, including the Steering Committee, in identifying or even establishing relevant criteria for each area covered in the report. Fourth, they must encourage each committee to compare the data gathered earlier in the self-study process to these criteria and draw some conclusions about how well the college has performed. Fifth, and finally, coordinators must instruct committees to prioritize, to present honest assessments of the college's strengths and weaknesses, and to recommend needed changes. Committees should also know that the Steering Committee will be the final arbiter of what is included in the overall Self-Study Report and will, therefore, undertake a cumulative evaluation of data and conclusions of all the self-study committees.

If these suggestions are followed—and if the final result is a well-written and attractively presented Self-Study Report—the NCA team will be impressed with the thoroughness and honesty of the Self-Study Report. The team will arrive on campus with a positive impression of the college's commitment to understand itself and to know what it needs to do to serve its students well.

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Writing the Self-Study: Potential Pitfalls

Earl R. Alton
Kathryn Heltne Swanson

Introduction

Writing the Self-Study Report in preparation for the October 1996 NCA team visit to Augsburg College required coordinated efforts from many members of the college. Writing the Self-Study Report took place over a two-year period. Initially, the President appointed the Steering Committee, from which we formed eight subcommittees with representatives from across the campus—faculty, staff, and administrators. The eight subcommittee chairs comprised the Self-Study Steering Committee; each subcommittee addressed the five Criteria for Accreditation for its own area. In pulling together the information each subcommittee presented, the Steering Committee and Coordinators readily saw that some parts were well done, others needed more attention. This presentation will focus on those areas that needed particular effort on the part of the Coordinator and the Associate Coordinator to make the Self-Study Report as complete and useful as possible.

Our experience was that the writing that described the work of the various areas of campus was done with interest and some enthusiasm. Generally, contributors were pleased to describe their accomplishments, often in great detail, so that presenting the institution's organization and programs was comparatively easy. Finding answers related to questions of completeness, selecting appropriate data, balancing presentations, and evaluating the material were more difficult. While our self-study process did not find perfect answers to questions, we want to indicate some strategies that were effective and some problems that remained. Focus on four questions was essential to writing the Self-Study Report; thus, we present these areas of potential difficulty to alert others who write their Self-Study Reports.

At the outset and on a continuing basis it was important to help members of the Steering Committee develop an attitude of reflection and evaluation so that they would keep these questions in mind and address them throughout the drafting and revision of the Self-Study Report. This was done by reminding members during Steering Committee meetings, asking for critical comments from the committee, and making evaluations part of the re-writing process.

Avoiding Some Pitfalls: Asking These Questions

☐ Has Anything Been Overlooked?

The goal of a Self-Study Report is to represent the college as completely and accurately as possible. Persons serving on the Steering Committee know their college very well and tend to assume everyone knows what seems so obvious to them. One technique we used was to keep asking the Steering Committee during meetings to look at sections written by chairs of other subcommittees to see if anything had been omitted. This process is time consuming and members of the Steering Committee also may know the College so well that some facets are overlooked, but it was helpful to continue to ask the question. Thus, multiple readers for each draft helped to ensure that important information was not omitted and that all statements regarding the College were as clear as possible.

It also was useful was for the Coordinator to keep copies of everything that was submitted to avoid overlooking anything. This process required an attitude of alertness and persistence in asking for information. For example, on our campus, some all-college symposia, such as the Christensen Symposium or the Batalden Ethics Seminar, are the responsibility of committees working with endowed funds. These all-campus events were likely to be omitted from departmental descriptions and were not explicitly mentioned in administrative reports. Ultimately, they were not overlooked, because the Coordinator kept published information about the symposia, as well as schedules for a large number of events, and made sure that appropriate subcommittees incorporated the materials into their writing. Again, during the course of a discussion in the Dean's Office, the Coordinator learned of the existence of an "Operations Committee," and was able to track down its membership and responsibility for incorporation into the discussion of collaborative efforts of student services. This Committee—which establishes procedures for student interaction with the Registrar, Financial Aid, and the Business Office—plays a significant role in establishing and maintaining smooth processes for students; it was important to include its functions in the self-study.

Significant current events on campus also needed to be addressed and integrated into the text of the document. For example, as the final draft was being completed, vigorous discussions of salary matters occurred on campus. This debate needed to be, and was, included in the Self-study. It was important to report, with as much objectivity as possible, both sides of the debate and to weave issues that surfaced into a larger picture of the College. It was most helpful to include very timely information about how the conflicts were addressed via establishment of a specific task force and planning committee. Thus, new information was woven into existing descriptions to present, in this case, ways in which various systems address problems and issues as they arise.

☐ What Data Exist to Support Assertions?

In its Self-Study Report, a college presents data of all sorts and all of it is open to praise, interpretation, or explanation. In our Report, financial and enrollment data were examined for trends. Financial data were obtained from normal reports—audits, reports to the church, and other bodies. Augsburg had had a recent bond issue, which became helpful in analyzing the financial situation. Sometimes data presented did not seem consistent; it was important for the Coordinator and Steering Committee to wrestle with the origin and presentation of the data. While data are generated in many sectors of the college, two examples illustrate the nature of discussions of data. In examining the number of persons in the "administration" category over the decade, it became apparent that reclassification of positions had occurred; it was important to show these changes in the Self-Study. In a second example, categories used in one department related to funds raised were inconsistent with categories used in another, so there had to be an understanding of both sets of data to make a significant comparison.

Other data showed student satisfaction, or lack thereof, and again trends were examined. The data presenting the greatest challenge were those that, arguably, had some uncertainty. For example, the Steering Committee rightly dropped data for seniors regarding their graduation skills because the sample was too small. The results of a commercial Alumni Survey were questioned because there were no national norms, a fact learned after the analysis of the results had begun. Ultimately, this survey provided insight into alumni satisfaction and was kept in the Self-Study. A third area that required careful consideration was the correlation between graduates' self-reports of their post-baccalaureate activities and data obtained from national testing, such as the GRE or MCAT. Here, we tried to understand the inconsistency between the number of persons taking such exams and those who were enrolled in post-baccalaureate education.

☐ Is the Presentation of the Institution Objective or, as the Associate Coordinator Likes To Say, Is It Propaganda?

The language used in writing the Self-Study Report may convey a sense that the presentation is objective, it may read as a "pie-in-the sky" public relations piece, or it may show considerable pique. It is helpful for the Self-Study Coordinator to set the tone for the writing early in the process and for members of the Steering Committee to watch for extreme pessimism or exuberance. It is important to resist writers' temptations to use the self-study to advance personal agendas. There is a tricky balance needed here. Many voices need to be woven into the final Self-Study Report, but the presentation of data should have a consistent tone. This task is complicated by the multiple authorships of material to be integrated into the final document. Clearly, if the Self-Study Report is to present the college as it is; it needs to point out areas where it does very well, as well as areas where there are problems to address. The editor makes a major contribution in pointing out where the language is not consistent with the data. Sometimes, particular programs may tend to glorify accomplishments and numbers of students served; perhaps there is a tendency for each program to see its own domain rather than its place within the whole institution. In Augsburg's Self-Study, some of the most positive and exuberant language came from the Development Office, since that is the frame of mind personnel in that office have as they greet potential donors. Some of the most realistic language came from College Relations, as they try to present Augsburg in a balanced way. It is essential that tone be addressed early in the writing and be monitored carefully throughout the drafting of the Self-Study Report.

☐ Have You Evaluated What has been Written? What are the Strengths and Challenges?

This evaluation component of the Self-Study Report was clearly the most difficult, and at the same time the most important consideration for the college. Knowing and having a passion for the college makes it more difficult for persons to think about what might be improved. It is much easier to describe than to evaluate. The Coordinator began discussing the evaluative role at the first Steering Committee meeting. There was general agreement that the self-study was to be used to identify both strengths and challenges and thus to be useful for planning.

The actual evaluation, however, was difficult. With each draft of the Self-Study, the Coordinator and Associate Coordinator found themselves asking for more evaluation. Again trends and surveys, such as financial or enrollment trends and the Regents' survey, were helpful in identifying strengths and challenges. Each vice president was asked to summarize the areas for which he/she was responsible; again the analysis was mixed, ranging from a balanced presentation to "we need more resources."

Phrasing the problem and questions to ask seem to be especially important. Our NCA staff liaison kept us asking "So What?" That phrase helped members of the Steering Committee focus on evaluation. For every section of description, for every set of data, members of the Steering Committee were reminded to write a "So What?" section. It was not enough to state what we do, what we hope to do, what we need to do. We also asked, "Why do we do this or plan to do this? How do description and data as presented inform decisions at the institution?" The Coordinator made some suggestions regarding evaluative language, which helped generate some additional analysis. The vice presidents responded well to encouragement from the Coordinator to take another look at strengths and concerns in each of their areas. Two vice presidents, in particular, were very thorough and analytical as they drafted their sections of the document and their work served as models for other members of the Steering Committee.

To make the Self-Study as helpful as possible to the institution, the reflection and evaluation has to be part of every draft, a feature that requires constant monitoring. It was helpful to recognize, early in the process, the need to go beyond mere description so that the format was more consistent and the crucial evaluative questions could be addressed. Ultimately, it was this very push to reflect and evaluate the submitted material, as well as the insight and cooperation of the members of the Steering Committee, that made it possible to construct a useful document.

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Technological Innovation in the Self-Study Process

Cynthia Macaluso
J. Scott Murdoch

Introduction

When the University of Minnesota's Twin Cities campus underwent the institutional accreditation process ten years ago, in 1986, the computer technology available to support the self-study process was limited to word processing. All self-study documents and reports were printed and bound; only a limited number of individuals at the University and on the evaluation team had access to them. Because the University of Minnesota's Self-Study Report alone comprised more than 500 pages in two separate volumes, it was difficult and expensive to distribute. Members of the larger University community and the public, had no involvement in the self-study process and were probably largely unaware that the process was taking place.

Today the Internet has become a critical support for higher education planning. During the 1996 NCA accreditation process, the University of Minnesota was able to use both e-mail and the World Wide Web to provide greatly increased, paperless access to the accreditation process and to the University itself, for the evaluation team, students, staff, and the community at large.

Use of the World Wide Web

The Office of Planning and Analysis at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, is part of the Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs. The office exists to coordinate the University planning process and to analyze policies and issues in higher education. It serves as a liaison to governmental and other agencies, evaluates activities, reports official University statistics, and manages specific institutional development projects. In August 1995, the Office of Planning and Analysis developed a World Wide Web site (http://www.opa.pres.umn.edu/) where University data, reports, and information about projects could be readily accessible to staff, faculty, and students. Four members of the office were involved in creating documents and reports for the Web.

The institutional self-study process at the University of Minnesota also began in earnest in 1995. By fall 1995, the North Central Advisory Committee, appointed by President Nils Hasselmo, had begun writing a draft of the Self-Study Report, and in January 1996, an early version of the report was available to the Web team. At a meeting of the Self-Study Coordinator, the Web team, and other staff in the office, a decision was made to set aside a large portion of the Web site for information about accreditation, including a complete browsable copy of the Self-Study Report, with all tables, figures, and appendices, and links to important documents and information available on the Web from other offices at the University.

Until the Self-Study Report was finalized, there was no way to release it on the Web. Initially, the Web team prepared a series of pages highlighting undergraduate and graduate education, research, outreach, faculty, user-friendliness, finances, and diversity at the University. There were links to Web pages maintained by the University's colleges, a description of the accreditation process, e-mail links to members of the North Central Advisory Committee, and links to interesting or innovative Web sites at the University. The URL for these pages, with the materials introducing them to the University of Minnesota, was mailed to the evaluation team. In addition, the Web team created a form to allow staff, faculty, and students to submit the URLs of their Web pages for inclusion in the final Self-Study Report.

Shortly before the site visit occurred, the entire Self-Study Report, with all appendices, was completed and made available on the Office of Planning and Analysis Web site. The URL for the document was released to the press and through a University-wide newsletter to faculty and staff. After the evaluation team had completed its evaluation, the Team Report and the University of Minnesota's formal response also were placed on the site. The URL was re-released to the public, in a press release, and internally both in newsletters and the campus newspaper, *The Minnesota Daily*. At this point the entire University had access to the documents in a paperless format; in fact, anyone, anywhere in the world who had access to the World Wide Web could read Minnesota's self-study, NCA team report, and response. This was an unprecedented amount of public disclosure of a process that generally takes place quietly and behind the scenes. The University of Minnesota clearly took a large step toward partnership with its community by allowing complete access to the accreditation process. Table 1 below is a summary of the activity on the Web site between early May 1996 (prior to the site visit) and the end of October 1996 (after release of the NCA Team Report and the University's response). Clearly, the site has been of use to students, staff, faculty, and the public.

Area of Site	Accesses from outside the U of MN	Accesses from inside the U of MN
main accreditation page	228	588
self-study (all parts)	588	495
overview and Criteria for Accreditation	135	87
NCA Team Report and U of MN responses	48	237

Table 1

Activity on Accreditation Web site between May 1996 and October 1996

Converting Text into a Web Document

As the chapters of the Self-Study Report were completed, they were converted to HTML, the programming language of the Web. It is important to note that the report was written as any other text document, with no planning for its conversion to HTML. A great deal of the formatting used in the original document had to be changed to fit the constraints of the technology; the entire system of headings had to be revised, numbering and bulleting redone, and some graphics recreated. Also, because HTML does not provide a way to create page breaks, it was difficult to delineate "sections" in the document. Eventually the Web team created an entirely new "clickable" table of contents with links directly to the revised section headings, so that the reader could navigate through the report without endless scrolling.

Web technology has changed considerably, even since the May 1996 team visit to the University of Minnesota. It is common now to use "frames" to organize a document. With frames, the Web page itself is divided into sections—often a narrow column on the left of the screen with a larger rectangular area to the right; and a table of contents can appear unchanging in the left column, even as the text in the right "frame" changes from page to page. Using frames would have made the Self-Study Report much easier for readers to navigate, because they would have had the clickable table of contents constantly available to let them travel to any section of the document.

Another difficulty in creating the Web version of the Self-Study Report was the use of tables and charts. The tables in the text document were created as tabbed-over text in Microsoft Word, and could not be converted to HTML with any automated process. All the data elements in the 65 tables, therefore, were hand-coded in HTML. Creating the tables initially as Word tables, or in a spreadsheet such as Microsoft Excel, would have allowed an automated conversion, saving hundreds of hours of work.

The appendix includes a list of recommendations for those planning to convert accreditation documents into Web pages.

E-mail/Virtual Town Meeting

Prior to the arrival of the NCA evaluation team, e-mail accounts were set up for each team member. The team members were sent these e-mail addresses in advance of their visit, so that they could forward their home e-mail if they chose to do so. In addition, a "mail exploder" was set up, so that students, staff, and faculty could send comments and questions to every member of the NCA evaluation team at once. This mail exploder was advertised in *The Minnesota Daily* and on flyers across campus as a "virtual town meeting"—an opportunity for those who could not attend other meetings or who did not have a chance to speak at other meetings to make their comments heard.

Both a PC and a Macintosh computer, as well as two printers, were available in the Resource Room at all times, so that the NCA team could check the "town meeting" mail. In addition, the Web team was available as technical support from 8-6 each day to assist with e-mail, Web, Telnet, and word processing problems.

Evaluation of the Use of Technology

There were several advantages to the University of Minnesota's use of technology during the accreditation process. First, the process was open and inclusive and allowed the University's community-at-large to be informed and to participate. The Self-Study Report and the NCA Team Report were made readily available to thousands of people who would not have been on a standard distribution list for the paper document. In addition, the cost of printing more than 600 pages in bound volumes for general distribution is prohibitive; the overhead cost of running a World Wide Web site had already been absorbed. Finally, NCA team members were able to preview both the University and the Self-Study Report through the Web site and to communicate, effectively, with their home universities, each other, and staff and students at the University of Minnesota, through e-mail.

Disadvantages to using the technology were few. The University's exposure to the public was extensive and unique; this type of exposure might be uncomfortable for some colleges and universities. The advantage of public participation and knowledge, however, far outweighed this problem at the University of Minnesota.

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Technological Innovation in the Self-Study Process

Appendix

Web Document Pointers

(to be considered when writing documents that will be converted to Web pages)

Table of Contents

Because Web documents are ALL ONE PAGE, it is really important to have a table of contents for all documents. Otherwise, the reader must scroll through all of the text to find a particular section. If you can provide a table of contents for your document, links can be made from the table to section headings and subsection headings, so that readers can navigate more easily. The table of contents in the Accreditation Self Study (http://www.opa.pres.umn.edu/specproj/accred/toc.htm) is a good example of this on our site.

Headings

◇ Headings can be varied in size and font and can be either normal or bold.

◇ Heading position can vary:

aligned left,

centered,

or aligned right.

The most important rule is to be consistent in your use of heading size and position throughout your document. This allows the Web author to create links that make sense from the table of contents.

Figures

◇ Figures are scanned and saved in separate graphics files. When a document is requested that contains one of these graphics files, the graphics file is downloaded with the document. Figures scanned from completed hardcopy document look VERY BAD because photocopying has reduced their quality, and because whatever is on the other side of the page "bleeds" through.

◇ Figures provided as separate files, on diskette, or printed at 600 dpi on individual separate pages look good in the finished Web document. Be aware that:

— The more crowded the figure is, the more poorly it will scan.

— The smaller the font size in the figure, the more poorly it will scan.

— The more shades of gray used in a figure, the more poorly it will scan.

— It is impossible to get an acceptable graphics file from a two-sided photocopy.

Tables

◇ Tables can be converted, when you create them as actual tables in your word processing program or as tables in a spreadsheet, rather than as tabbed-over text. Anything that is formatted in columns, whether there is a table border or not, will be converted to a table in HTML. Please think about whether your table would be clearer with or without borders, bold headings, lines between rows, etc. Many kinds of tables can be created; however, but often tables without borders are difficult to follow. Here is an example of a table with the border (it appears later without a border):

1. Vanilla	Vanilla	Vanilla
2. Chocolate	Chocolate	Chocolate
3. Strawberry	Strawberry	Strawberry

Formatting

◇ Underlining cannot be converted. Currently, there is no browser that can interpret the underline tag correctly, and it is confusing, since active links are underlined on Web pages. Underlined text can be converted to bold text. Italics is supported by most browsers. However, *it* tends to be difficult to read on a computer screen. Be forewarned that there are a few browsers in which italics can appear as bold.

◇ Because the margins are narrow and the text is wide on web pages, lists inside paragraphs, such as the following, are hard to understand.

1) Vanilla, 2) Chocolate, 3) Strawberry

Here are better ways to make lists. Items can be ordered, unordered, or just indented.

1. Vanilla	Vanilla	Vanilla
2. Chocolate	Chocolate	Chocolate
3. Strawberry	Strawberry	Strawberry

◇ An HTML document is ALL ONE LONG PAGE. Currently, there is no way to make physical page breaks. Visual page breaks can be made with a horizontal line or by leaving extra space.

◇ Arrows and most other typographic characters cannot be created in HTML. Any text or chart with arrows must be made into scanned figures (see figures section).

◇ It is only possible to leave ONE SPACE between letters or words. Tabs are read as one space.

◇ HTML does not support multiple columns. All multiple column type documents must be changed to standard paragraph type documents or borderless tables.

Use of E-mail and Standardized Word Processing "Styles" in Writing a Self-Study

Frederick A. Marcotte

Electronic Mail

Communication among the Self-Study Coordinator, all groups working on the self-study, and staff and faculty members is mandatory for completing a self-study that is both useful and that virtually everyone can buy into when it is completed. E-mail allows a non-hierarchical communication path that generates copies so easily that it is not worth restricting distribution to committee chairs, department heads, or other supervisors, who would then distribute further, "as needed." You will need to keep all your self-study e-mail correspondence until after the team visit, in case the team wishes to check on anything. Place a copy of your e-mail file list with the other available documents in the team Resource Room during the visit.

Self-Study Coordinator and E-mail

The extent of e-mail penetration in your organization will affect your use of e-mail for coordination of the self-study, as will your own communication style. Having to print out messages to distribute manually because only a small percentage of the faculty and staff have access to e-mail will put a severe crimp in heavy use of e-mail for communicating. The latest generation of e-mail software, using Windows-based graphical user interfaces and protocols that allow attachment of or sending of virtually any kind of document, will enhance the utility of e-mail for self-study communication.

E-mail has at least four significant advantages:

- ◇ It is fast.
- ◇ It can decrease the length of meetings, when information is disseminated prior to meetings.
- ◇ It has the potential to allow *all* to participate.
- ◇ It can save *lots* of paper.

E-mail Is Fast

Provided that most of your organization has access to e-mail, you can send out a message within minutes of your decision to do so. Virtually all e-mail systems have a "group" sending capability with various centrally-maintained mailing lists (as well as the ability to maintain personal groups). As such, addressing and distributing to appropriate groups is much easier than the alternative—printing a document, reproducing it, and then physically placing it in mail boxes.

Decreased Meeting Times

The advantage of decreased meeting time accrues to **any** meeting, not just those involving the self-study. However, since attendance at a significant number of meetings is the hallmark of being a Self-Study Coordinator, anything that streamlines the meeting process or actually reduces the number of meetings should be done. Requiring committee chairs to send any documents and the agenda prior to meetings will reduce dead time in meetings, provided you can get the attendees to change their habits to do their homework ahead of time.

You can actually cut out some meetings by distributing and soliciting comments by e-mail, for materials you consider non-controversial, but for which you need external input or review. If what is distributed turns out to hit a nerve and becomes controversial, you can schedule a meeting. You might be surprised at how much is **not** controversial and can be done via e-mail. In any case, you must be sensitive to your campus culture to establish a balance between use of e-mail and meetings for resolving issues.

Participation by All

Faculty are notorious for wanting to be consulted, but not wanting to be tied up in meetings. E-mail is an excellent way to consult them, to allow for individual comments, and to trim non-productive meetings. Yes, you want to have some meetings for face-to-face interaction, but many details can be ironed out via e-mail first. E-mail also allows for groups that have been disenfranchised to participate. Support staff have tended to have little involvement in group processes, because someone has to stay behind to staff the front lines. Often support staff know "where the bodies are buried" and have significant relevant input to a self-study.

Saving Paper

Some people will print out what you send them, but very few will print out things that they will pitch in the trash can after reading. You can save considerable paper by establishing a "public mail box" to post drafts of chapters when completed. A public mail box enables anyone interested in reading a document to look at it without sending it to everyone's mail box or printing out paper drafts. Set up a public mail box without a password so that anyone can access it. Since some e-mail systems would overload if a large document were sent to a campus-wide mailing list, a public mail box avoids this overload. However, you may decide to print out at least one draft for everyone early on, since the "feel" of an electronic copy is not the same as a paper copy, and you can't mark up an e-mail copy as easily (depending on the e-mail system used).

Additionally, although not within the scope of this paper, drafts can also be posted to Web pages for consulting/printing, although this requires some additional editing to add HTML codes, unless one uses a program such as HTML, Transit (from InfoAccess Corp). Since you probably do not want your drafts to be circulated world wide, you can either set up an "intranet," to allow access only to internal users, or establish a password-protected section on your general Web site.

Word Processing "Styles"

◇ **Automation of typing.** Word processing has been a great boon to those who must compose documents of significant length and complexity such as Self-Study Reports. Word processing can also increase the revision process, since you can do a new draft easily, rather than working hard on two or three drafts to "get it right" the first time. Each new generation of word processing software brings more "bells and whistles," allowing greater integration of document types, such as spreadsheets, charts, and illustrations. Newer versions of software allow integration of separate documents, automatically generate tables of contents and indexes, etc. Word processing also allows for things that impede the integration of documents, such as different type faces and font sizes, different margins, different page lengths, etc. The self-study process must address standardization of how a document is initially composed so that it can be integrated and published as one document. This is in addition to addressing composition style, standardized use of abbreviations and internal references, etc.

If you delegate writing of sections of the Self-Study Report, you need to be fairly rigid in defining the kind of document you want, in terms of content, writing style, and word processing "style." Content and writing style are not addressed here. "Styles" is a WordPerfect feature (also available on other word processors) that allows you to specify in detail a number of characteristics of a document. A style will substitute for the "initial" settings defaults on a computer.

If you have multiple computer platforms on your campus, don't despair. Nearly identical styles can be written for the common platforms, if you use WordPerfect. Most newer Macs can or do have DOS compatible drives for copying files. Create styles according to the most common platform on your campus (or the one you know will be used for final editing), and work with users to achieve compatibility. The author's campus used VAX WordPerfect 5.1 (on VT terminals), PC WordPerfect for Windows 6.0 and 6.1, and the Mac equivalent of 6.0. The biggest problem in this situation was to remember to "save" documents in the "save as" mode, as 5.1 documents, before transferring them to the VAX, for WordPerfect e-mail dissemination.

◇ **Initial settings.** One can change the initial default settings for WordPerfect at the workstation; one can specify changes in (but not limited to): margins, fonts, type size, margin justification, line spacing, etc. When you come to integrating what has been written, you may end up with a document where one section has one inch margins, another has 1.2 inch margins; someone who likes full justification may have written a section that goes next to a document written by someone who accepted the WordPerfect default of left justification. You can develop a WordPerfect "Style" and require people to copy that file to their workstations; they call it up (it is part of the power bar) and activate it when they work on their portion of the document. You will end up with a more consistent document with fewer editing problems. Note: Mac and PC versions of styles must be written separately, but the PC version can be used on a VAX WordPerfect terminal, after transferring it from the workstation to the VAX via FTP or Kermit (depending on your system's capabilities).

◇ **Heading settings.** Another application for "Styles" is to incorporate specific heading styles for each level of the document. For example, you could incorporate in a style format "heading 1" for major chapter divisions, "heading 2" for sections within major chapter divisions, "heading 3" for the next level, etc. Each heading should have distinct characteristics, such as a specified font style, size, attribute, and indentation. This establishes uniformity in documents created by different writers. Use of "bullets," "dashes," or other stylistic conventions for lists is not part of a WordPerfect "Style." These must be addressed in separate instructions.

Written instructions also should address what information is to be presented at what heading level. For example, a major organizational division would be "heading one." If you decide that each organizational element addresses all appropriate NCA criteria, each criterion would be "heading two." That way, when the documents are returned to you for integration into the Report, the information should be presented consistently. In addition, if your report is organized by function, rather than by criteria, and you require each area to address all criteria, it should be easier to cut and paste to create your summary chapter. If you organize your chapters by criteria, you would set your heading styles accordingly.

◇ **Automatic Table of Contents.** When writing specifications for different "headers," do *not* use the same detail for each level of header. This allows you to generate an automatic table of contents, to the level you choose. For example, if the first level of the table of contents is centered, bold, 25-point Times Roman, use Times Italicized 16-point for level two; and indented, bold, 14-point Times Roman for the next level, etc. It is important to develop heading formats that are compatible with the tone you wish to set for the document.

◇ **Headers, footers, and page numbering.** Although you could incorporate headers, footers, and page numbers in a "Style," you can also incorporate these word processing features in the "master document" (WordPerfect) used to combine individual chapters (assuming you wish to create the document in separate sections). The features are easier to deal with in the master document. Remember, when writing instructions to authors, to tell them to follow established styles and **not** to create these things on their own. Otherwise, you will have to remove them when you combine the document.

◇ **Tables, charts, graphics, etc.** Tables and charts are not part of a "Style," but your instructions for preparing drafts of documents must address how these are to be handled. Your goal should be to describe all necessary components in one set of documents so that when you press "Print" for the final draft it will come out of the printer ready to be reproduced. Most word processing packages can create tables and can import materials from spreadsheet packages (watch landscape printing codes for spreadsheets when integrating them). Graphics may be scanned and included, depending on your aesthetic sensibilities for resolution of the materials. Alternatively, create blank spaces within the documents where graphics can be inserted. In early drafts, it may be better to "cut and paste" manually to show the graphics.

Conclusion

This paper assumes that the Self-Study Coordinator is reasonably proficient with e-mail and word processing. Your campus publications office may be able to provide assistance in designing the final document, and in creating both the written directions and the "Styles" for inputting the document. The keeper of e-mail must create a public mailbox (if it is possible on your e-mail system) and write directions on how to access it. Send those directions every time you send e-mail to the campus that you have placed another document in the common mailbox.

If your campus has advanced word processing classes, you might ask the instructor to assign a project to design self-study "Styles" and layouts, from which you can choose.

The use of e-mail can reduce your meeting time considerably; it can increase communication with the campus. Use of "Styles" can cut editing time substantially, when the document is compiled. If you think ahead and require all writers to address each criterion in a consistent manner, you should be able to integrate a concluding chapter without too much work.

☐ Note

At the time the self-study was in preparation, the University of Cincinnati Clermont College campus was using WordPerfect Office e-mail on a VAX VMS system with WordPerfect 5.1 word processing on the VAX. This e-mail system allows attaching fully formatted WordPerfect documents as files, but not other documents. Everyone used WordPerfect. However, some worked on terminals on the VAX, some were on PC workstations connected to WP 6.0 for Windows on a Novell network, some were on WP for Macs, and a couple used WordPerfect 6.1 for Windows outside the network. By Winter quarter 1996-97 some staff and faculty were starting a migration to Eudora Pro, a Windows-based e-mail system; everyone is scheduled to do the same by later in the year. A Windows FTP program was available to copy files to and from PC workstations and the VAX. PC and Mac workstation WordPerfect documents had to be saved as 5.1 files to be usable on the VAX since 5.1+ was not loaded on the VAX.

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Using the Self-Study Process: Can Institutional Reflection Ever Be Worth the Investment?

Faye D. Plascak-Craig
Joseph R. Dell'Aquila

Institutional Profile

Marian College (Indianapolis, IN) is a private, religious-affiliated (Catholic), "baccalaureate II" college with a student body headcount of about 1200. We are located in a major metropolitan area, with five other near-by institutions. The student body profile includes residential and commuter students, and the majority of commuters are older than 24. Students are primarily from Indiana (95%) and enroll in professional studies (70%). The college requires 35% of BA/BS degree graduation hours in General Education, and uses two main emphases in publications: Marian the College that Mentors, and the four Oldenburg Franciscan values: reconciliation, responsible stewardship, dignity of the individual, and justice and peace. Marian offers 15 varsity sports (no football), and the college engages in multiple community outreach and volunteer programs for off-campus agencies, parishes, and school districts. Marian College has begun a major capital campaign this year.

The purpose of this presentation and paper is to share with you our self-study story, not as a model of how a self-study process is implemented true to its plan, but as an example of how a self-study process can be altered in "mid-stream" to attain its goals. Even though it was not carried out as planned, and did not attain all that we hoped, our self-study has indeed resulted in institutional reflection and improvement that was well worth the time and effort invested.

Background for Our Self-Study Process

Prior to 1992, the college had amassed a large amount of information about its operations, but that information was not consistently analyzed or used to inform decision-making. Few change initiatives, and particularly changes involving assessment of performance, had been effectively implemented in recent history, with the exception of the adoption of a Professional Development Program for faculty and staff that originated from an external grant. In general, up to this time, there had been few "change success stories" to build on.

In 1992, a newly-hired Academic Dean, with experience in the Southern Association for higher educational accreditation, alerted personnel of the need to ready the institution for evaluation by the new and revised five NCA criteria. The college was scheduled for a re-accreditation visit in January 1996, which placed us in the group of schools that must submit an assessment plan for panel review in 1994-95. The president, academic dean, and two faculty members who were appointed as self-study director and assessment coordinator attended the 1993 NCA Annual Meeting. We conveyed the message that this re-accreditation would require more preparation, assessment, and time than had previous reviews, and we began to plan for our January 1996 visit by:

◇ reading the NCA materials (and attending 1994 and 1995 NCA Annual Meetings)

◇ appointing a Steering Committee of 16 members (12 of whom include faculty, staff, a student, a trustee, and an alumna, as well as four who are consultants)

◇ creating a set of common goals to guide self-study planning

- to better define Marian College's overall effectiveness
- to put in place and use assessment, especially assessment of student learning outcomes, for institutional improvement
- to develop a unified, informed direction for future planning and activities
- to demonstrate that Marian College satisfies all NCA's GIRs and Criteria to earn the ten year reaffirmation of accreditation

◇ creating and submitting a Plan for Assessment of Student Achievement (submitted on November 11, 1994, and approved on first review without revision)

◇ finding existing data sources and developing lists of information needs

◇ determining what must be updated/revised/developed to meet the GIRs and criteria

Several college meetings were held to introduce the NCA criteria, timelines, and materials to the faculty and staff, at which we received the often repeated, in many different settings and forms, "How can this add-on preparation for NCA, ever be worth all the time and effort we expend?" Some of the negative responses reflected an unexamined complacency, a perception that there was no need for change, e.g., "If it's not broke, why fix it?" So, we began—working in a climate of complacency, assessment anxiety, little positive experience with external reviews, and archival data comprised of descriptive rather than evaluative reports—in the belief that we would first motivate and correct the perception that change isn't needed, thus creating enthusiasm for this long-term project as we attained our self-study goals.

Things Seldom Go as Planned

In brief, our steering committee's "plan of action" was (a) to hold informational workshops, providing the needed "tools" for constructing unit reports, and (b) to assign a committee resource person to each operational area, to help as the unit chairs/supervisors gathered and analyzed information, wrote evaluative reports, and assembled supportive documentation for the exhibit room. These unit reports would then be integrated to construct the institutional self-study. The development and writing of each "story" would correct the complacency and generate enthusiasm for institutional reflection and improvement.

Sixteen workshops for faculty and staff, held over a three-year period, provided readings, examples from other institutions, booklets, pamphlets, handouts, guidelines, and formats. In addition to summarizing available data and obtaining needed data for the unit reports, it became apparent that the college's mission statement and the general education program needed revision before institution-wide assessment could proceed. The self-study process was made more difficult at this point because the Academic Dean was not returning after the spring of 1994.

In May 1994, with sixteen months until our self-study was to be sent to NCA, we "took stock." The self-study director asked for an interim progress report from the committee members, academic chairs, and program directors. With the exception of a few academic departments, the Student Affairs division, the off-campus programs, and the Learning and Counseling Center, little was happening. Few were taking time from day-to-day activities to consult with their assigned committee member and do the planned tasks and writing. The strategy was not working. What now?

The President and Acting Academic Dean empowered the director and assessment coordinator to institute task forces, with timelines and specific formats. Over a summer, the mission and general education program were "re-organized" to support assessment and meet the GIRs. Self-study unit report drafts and data were requested directly from administrative units and academic departments, reviewed, and feedback provided by the director, assessment coordinator, and appropriate committee members. We worked as editors, as quality control reviewers, rather than motivational resource guides to an ongoing process. We completed the self-study by late fall 1995, organized the exhibit room, and made final preparations for the January 28-31, 1996, team visit. We received a ten-year re-accreditation, with a required report on strategic financial planning, due August 15, 1997.

In retrospect, we believe the new tasks required and the change-resistant climate did not allow a "guidance/resource" approach to work. One doesn't allocate time for planning, assessment, and change for improvement when initiatives have not been successful in the past. What is given little time is also not practiced, mastered, or valued. We took a more directive approach to structuring unit tasks, and the components of the revised self-study plan that worked best for us were:

- well-researched workshops on assessment, syllabi, course design, and self-study
- distribution of one department's self-study to those academic departments that had not shown much progress
- focused task forces for controversial tasks
- use of direct appeals, rather than the exisiting governance system, for approval of changes
- a system of small group review of units/departmental drafts
- a system of multiple revisions for unit and departmental reports
- a division of oversight responsibility for academic and administrative units
- support from key executive officers when requested
- frequent reference to the need for self-studies to meet the NCA criteria, linking assessments to planning and improvement

How Has Marian College Benefitted from the Self-Study Process?

In general, the college as a body has altered its perspectives, its knowledge base, its practices, and its structures. We better understand WHY mission and institutional goals are so important—they are no longer regarded as just rhetoric for recruitment pamphlets. There is an understanding of the difference between student perspectives and assessment of student learning outcomes. Units and academic departments have developed new tools and practices for gathering more relevant data for use in planning. Several programs and evaluation systems have been improved, and a re-visiting of personnel policies and academic governance, this time with useful assessments, is to be one of the improvement targets for 1997-98. The following specific improvements have occurred at Marian College:

☐ Institutional

1. The mission and goals have been revised twice for better accuracy and clarity. As a result of discussion with the evaluation team, the vice president initiated work to revise the mission "one more time" to better reflect the sponsorship values in the academic and co-curricular programs.
2. The General Education Program has been revised and better linked to mission and institutional goals. The current Academic Dean worked with a committee on the general education program, re-orienting the menu of courses around a set of five student learning goals that are better linked to the mission and institutional goal statements. A student learning assessment program is currently under development.
3. Faculty professional development plans, with at least one teaching improvement target, are now required for all faculty. Full-time faculty, submit professional development plans each spring for discussion with department chairs. Progress is to be reported and summarized when the next plan is submitted.
4. Faculty and staff evaluation systems have been revised and improved, reducing paper volume and linking promotion and tenure materials to professional development plans. In the past, P&T

documentation was a summary of activities; the revised documentation requires that accomplishments in the portfolio reflect professional development and improvements in teaching.

5. Assessment of student learning in the major, the General Education Program, the development courses, advising, exit surveys, and co-curricular/student life programs is now routinely administered and used for unit planning. Graduates in the major now participate in senior seminars, organized to reflect that year's target theme and to collect student learning data for evaluation. The PROFILE Exam provides indirect assessment of general education, and the College Student Survey and Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey are administered to graduates and to matriculants, respectively. Post-test achievement tests and goal attainment surveys are administered to participating students in developmental courses and in residence hall programs.

6. Student retention efforts are better informed and have become a high priority. Motivated by NCA review, a retention task force was charged to review data and make conclusions about the causes of student attrition. Six recommendations were submitted to the executive officers, and the appropriate academic and administrative units are to create interventions to increase retention in those areas identified as problematic.

7. A Developmental Advising Program, using increased department faculty-student contacts, academic and career information, and job search/interview skill training, was designed and implemented to better support the mission. Student advising satisfaction has improved since 1994, and a larger proportion reported they received training in job search techniques, interviewing, and resume writing.

8. Size of endowment has been identified as a crucial institutional vitality factor.

9. The college is developing a financial strategic plan, with timelines and budgets.

10. The Board of Trustees now has an orientation program and handbook. The Board members are more involved with the planning, financial and recruitment operations of the college than had been the case. More information has been shared, summarized and used to inform decisions at the trustee level.

11. A re-evaluation of degree requirements for BA and BS degrees is underway. Academic programs will be more in line with standard practice.

12. As a result of difficulties in the approval process for changes to academic and curriculum affairs, a re-evaluation of the academic governance system is being planned. The current College Council system does not provide a mechanism for faculty governance of academic programs and curricula.

☐ Academic/Program

13. Academic syllabi are improved and focused on student learning. Formats and design rigor were emphasized by the processes used to implement the NCA-approved Plan for Assessment of Student Academic Achievement. Although some revisions were done grudgingly, the syllabi for Spring 1996 were significantly better than those of the past.

14. The Honors Program has been revised and learning goals and assessments are under development.

15. Developmental courses for at-risk students are now better coordinated and learning assessments are under development. A peer tutoring program and student academic support services were specifically identified as institutional strengths in the final report from NCA. Plans have been drawn up for extending the course offerings into an actual integrated program for the under-prepared students at Marian College.

☐ Co-Curricular Programs

16. Mentoring is better defined and understood, and opportunities have been expanded in the community.

In summary, although the self-study was not without frustrations, the process was certainly worth the investment at Marian College. Because of the necessity of self-study for re-accreditation, many improvements have been made and are continuing to be made. In time, many, but not all, came to see the value in identifying strengths and weaknesses, and as a result of directed self-examination, Marian College has improved. Are we now a "culture of continuous assessment and improvement?" Not yet—but we are more aware that well-received, individual student service alone does not fulfill the mission of an institution of higher education; day-to-day operations must be linked to assessed institutional outcomes, and in turn, to institutional vitality. And perhaps it would prove beneficial for NCA to consider ongoing dialogue with all recently-reviewed institutions to support their persistence on the path of dynamic renewal. We persevere.

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Life After the NCA Visit—What Now?

James C. Fox
Rodney G. Pasch

Your college has spent months organizing itself for an accreditation visit. They have solicited volunteers to serve as the Self-Study Coordinator, or a chair of one of a variety of teams to respond to the North Central Association Criteria for Accreditation. These individuals have made a tremendous commitment of time, effort, and learning to establish new leadership skills and understand the interrelationships of the college mission and delivery of services. Suddenly the visit is over. The accreditation decision has been issued, and what happens now?

Often this question is left to dangle with some mystical belief that what is necessary to carry the college forward, to implement the recommendations of the team, and to plan for the future will happen serendipitously. It rarely does. Colleges that are successful in utilizing this rare opportunity need to exhibit three qualities to assure success:

◇ become a learning organization,

◇ grow their own change model, and

◇ establish new employee reward programs.

Becoming a Learning Organization

It seems quite contradictory for an educational institution to have to set a goal to become a learning organization. This is not to suggest that there are not many learned individuals within the college, but to suggest that the college has not organized the collective wisdom, knowledge, and skills of these individuals for a common purpose. When the learning organization starts to materialize, it is quite easy for an observer to witness the vitality, excitement, and synergy that seems to permeate the college.

How does a college become a learning organization? First and foremost, it takes the president and the leadership of the college to recognize the differences between leadership and managing. Both are absolutely critical elements of a successful college, but are quite different in a learning organization. The president needs to establish a diversified and representative group of the college who are willing to and capable of looking at the future in a much different way (i.e., a paradigm shift).

One of the most effective efforts the group can pursue is to research both public and private colleges, businesses, and consulting firms that literature and peer institutions have recognized as successful in facilitating and implementing paradigm shifts. The college can send one or two individuals to observe and retrieve information from that entity, have a representative from that college, business, or consulting firm give a presentation to your college, use the extensive resources of your library and the world wide communications technology it provides for related literature searches, or have a college focus group become consumers of change models through reading and studying what gurus of organizational change are saying.

The President should establish an aggressive, ongoing meeting schedule of the group to share, discuss, debate, and suggest additional paths to pursue for learning on an ongoing basis. Within a relatively short period of time, the college will abound with the excitement that learning produces. With the exchange and sharing of new paradigms will come the second step—growing your own change model.

Growing Your Own Change Model

Utilizing people who have honed their skills in successful North Central accreditation processes, the leadership of the college must first revisit the vision of the college. There is no question that a primary function of the President is to set the vision. How the President accomplishes this task is the first critical step in demonstrating to the staff of the organization whether a paradigm shift is really taking place, or whether it is simply another "program of the month."

A President, having actively involved college staff in learning, can ask the staff to share their written expressions of the preferred future of their college. Simple, explicit statements sent by college staff to the president and using any number of quality tools to organize the information can give the president great assistance in writing a new vision statement that is quickly and clearly understood by the entire organization. After all, they were key providers. The same process can be utilized to review and develop the following:

- **Mission of the college.** A written statement of purpose.
- **Guiding principles.** Critical values that guide employee relationships with customers and one another.
- **Long-term goals.** Focus on the gap between present organizational performance and the performance required to reach the mission.
- **Annual focus strategies.** Integrated with the three-year goals, focus on small numbers of key strategies.

Each time by doing this—playing "catch ball" throughout the organization—eventually the organization that thrives on learning, responds to the customer, and communicates with ease will enable all employees to have the "sense of knowing" where the college is going, how it is to happen, and their role in the outcome.

Throughout these processes, the leadership of the college must ask employees to participate and the employees must ask the leadership to participate. As with the North Central self-study process, it provides an opportunity to view new leaders, develop new leaders, and make organizational staffing changes to lead new initiatives. And paramount to all—serve the customer!

And finally, to recognize and provide incentives, the college must establish new employee reward programs.

New Employee Reward Programs

As employees begin to feel the vibrancy and excitement of a new vision and mission, a new sense of awareness of their contribution to the success of the organization will emerge. With the door open to change and acceptance of new ideas, employees will rush to center stage to offer ideas, concepts, and energy to make sure that their ideas see the light of day.

A new sense of individual worth and value will emerge among the employees, and they will be energized by their ideas and contributions to the college. As this new sense of awareness is recognized, employees will find that they have contributions that reach outside of their own current area of expertise and focus. They will find that what they do has an impact on others in the college; they are now just beginning to recognize this, whereas before they only had a vague idea. They will begin to question whether the leadership has recognized their value to the college and whether their compensation is correct.

At the same time, astute leadership will ask whether they have organized the work correctly to encourage people to work together to achieve the vision. They will ask, "Have old, narrowly-defined job descriptions limited the employee's desire to contribute? Have the salary ranges limited our ability to recognize the contributions of the employees? How can we reward employees for their ideas, their energy, and their contributions to the team's goals?" Most presidents will find that their current job and compensation system has become a barrier to the transition and rebirth of the "new" organization. Its own rules and procedures are holding back employees and managers and creating a roadblock to change.

A new model of change, vision, and mission also calls for a redefinition of how each employee contributes to the mission of the organization. The question becomes, "How do we redefine the work of our employees so that their contributions as individuals and as members of teams can be fully recognized and rewarded in an ongoing fashion?" By now, it is obvious that the old grade and range system is no longer viable to capture and reward fairly the contributions of employees who have changed from a single focus to multi-focus, multi-function.

The solution revolves around defining the jobs that employees do by the role and contribution that is made to the organization. New compensation models, developed in the last five-seven years, are available to develop a more open structure, while maintaining internal equity and market competitiveness. They consist of:

- ◇ a base compensation plan that allows for growth, learning, and sharing;
- ◇ a performance-based system that recognizes individual growth and personal advancement; and
- ◇ a monetary reward system and process that can be used to recognize and reward the continuation of behavior that reinforces the desired behaviors.

Other organizations are going along the same path as you are. You don't have to pave the way without guidance. The system that you develop is one that will be consistent with your mission, support your vision, and provide a rewarding environment for employee growth and continued contribution to the leadership of the new and vital learning organization.

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Chapter XI

Coordinating Special Types of Evaluations

Measuring Moving Targets...◆...◆...◆

102nd Annual Meeting of the North Central Association
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
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The Self-Study Process in a Geographically-Distributed System

Laura Palmer Noone
Susan Mitchell

Context

Since its accreditation in 1978, the University of Phoenix has participated in four affirmation visits occurring in 1982, 1987, 1992, and 1996, each of which resulted in reaffirmation for a period of five years. From its first class of eight students in Phoenix, Arizona, to its present enrollment of more than 30,000 students in 48 campuses and learning centers located in 10 states and Puerto Rico, and throughout the world via its Online and Distance Education campuses, the University has become a major provider of adult-centered education.

The Self-Study Process

Self-study in preparation for the most recent reaffirmation visit presented several challenges given a highly dispersed geographic system, the addition since the 1992 visit of several campuses in new states, and the creation of additional learning centers in already existing states. These challenges, however, were mitigated by the institution's highly integrated ongoing process of institutional self-study. The evidence of this is contained in the design and the results of the institution's Academic Quality Management System, including its Adult Learning Outcomes Assessment (ALOA) project, and in its many ongoing academic and administrative committees, which meet frequently.

At every level of the University and at each region and campus where program delivery occurs, committees meet regularly, focusing on identification of issues and concerns to the University at large, to the academic and administrative operations of each campus, and to the evaluation and improvement of its instructional programs. The intent of these many committees is to continually refine processes and procedures to improve institutional effectiveness. With the impending reaffirmation visit in October 1996, existing committees took as part of their focus the preparation for the upcoming visit.

In addition to the above ongoing structure, at the time the 1996 visit dates were set a Self-Study Steering Committee of five central administrators was appointed by the President of the University to oversee the self-study process. The Steering Committee, in turn, selected a Self-Study Committee of 16 members representing a broad sample of constituents of the University at the central administration and campus levels. Each member of this larger group was charged with leading the self-study effort in his/her own department by documenting changes and improvements since the 1992 comprehensive visit and developing recommendations for further study. The process included alignment of the new Mission and Purposes with department goals and plans and incorporation of department goals and plans into the ongoing strategic direction of the institution.

As part of the self-study process, campus self-study visits were organized and conducted by the Self-Study Committee and the Self-Study Steering Committee during the months of January through May 1996. These visits to each campus in the system were for the purpose of collecting information and data to be used in the Self-Study Report and to personally orient each campus' managers, staff, and faculty to the self-study process and the scope of the confirmation visit proposed for October 1996.

Self-study visit teams were formed, consisting of four individuals and a team leader from the Self-Study Steering Committee. These teams traveled to their assigned campuses from California to Puerto Rico, Michigan to Florida for a structured day of individual interviews with campus management and staff as well as document and facilities reviews. Open meetings with faculty, staff, and students also were held, and individual and group interview questions were designed and administered through face-to-face interaction between visiting team members and constituents at the campus. Each of these campus visits followed a uniform agenda, consisted of a common set of questions for each interview session, and a required format for file and facilities reviews. The campus visits took four months to complete and resulted in a summative list of campus strengths and concerns to assist departments at each campus in ongoing planning efforts, to feed information into the Self-Study Report and to infuse direction into the institution's Strategic Plan.

The Self-Study Report

The Self-Study Steering Committee also met weekly, and sometimes more often, to begin implementing the steps toward writing and completing the Self-Study Report. The Steering Committee reviewed other institution's Self-Studies to determine format and design of the document. The Steering Committee felt committed to a goal of a concise Report that still communicated the integrity of the self-study process, addressed the required elements of GIR's and Criteria, and provided enough information on institutional requests to allow for a positive visit and evaluation.

In the formative stages of the Report the Steering Committee worked with the Art Director for the University, an administrative assistant, and a copy editor from the University's curriculum development area to begin the drafting the document. Working drafts were reviewed and revised almost daily by the Steering Committee as the report was developed. In addition to this intensive ongoing effort, two process drafts were sent out to the entire University community for review and comment. Comment forms were developed to accompany the distribution of each draft in order to solicit input from all constituents and to have a consistent way to codify and track responses. In addition, the Steering Committee reviewed all responses received and modified the Report to reflect the input from the various audiences. The institution also posted the drafts of the Report on the Internet with access through the University's home page. The entire educational community of the University of Phoenix had the opportunity to read, study, and react to each draft of the Self-Study Report. The process allowed the institution at all levels to self-assess, reflect, and refocus priorities.

The Visit

Planning for the NCA team visit itself proved challenging. A fourteen-member evaluation team was proposed by NCA consisting of representatives from the Consultant-Evaluator Corps as well as one team member from each of the other regional accrediting bodies where the University has a campus. The final team consisted of evaluators from the North Central Association (NCA), the Western Association (WASC), the Northwest Association (NACS), the Middle States Association (MSA), and the Southern Association (SACS). A strategy was developed to accommodate cycle visits to at least one campus in each region by sub-teams of evaluators accompanied by a member of the Self-Study Steering Committee as well as a team formed to visit the central headquarters of the University and the campus located adjacent to it. These cycle visits began prior to and extended a week beyond the central headquarters visit. In this way, all team members were able to be in Phoenix at some time during the two and one-half day comprehensive visit and provide input for the exit report. This strategy made the campus visits that occurred after the comprehensive evaluation confirmatory in nature.

As an added convenience for the evaluation team, the University duplicated the layout and set-up of the centralized Resource Room at the hotel where the team stayed. Feedback from the team regarding this strategy suggests that other institutions might wish to consider this approach. The team spent several late nights in the hotel Resource Room and were grateful for the institution's foresight in providing this amenity.

Reflections

Strong organization of the self-study process, forms and procedures to guide this important aspect of the Report's development, and the involvement and input of individuals from across the institution made it possible to successfully complete this effort in a geographically distributed system that is without parallel among institutions of higher education in the United States today. At times, travel schedules and workload demands placed considerable pressure on the members of the Steering Committee. It was amazing at times to see how aligned the entire system became during the self-study process. At every moment throughout the process the institution's constituents pulled together to met the challenges of critical analysis and reflection, submission of written input on various tasks and drafts of the Report and conformance to set deadlines. This alignment is a necessity in conducting a successful and thorough self-study in a geographically distributed institution such as the University of Phoenix.

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Agesilaus and the Focused Visit

David R. Black
Mehraban Khodavandi

Background Information

Lakeland College enrolls 700 full-time undergraduate day and 140 MBA and M.Ed. graduate evening students at its main campus outside of Sheboygan, Wisconsin. More than 2600 evening undergraduate students are enrolled in degree programs in nine Wisconsin cities. Approximately 200 students are enrolled in Lakeland's English Language Institute and academic center in Tokyo, Japan.

In 1988, the college enrolled 390 day and 1150 evening students in undergraduate studies, with no graduate or international programs. The day program had declined from 685 to 390 students over a twelve year period, while the evening program had grown from 12 to 1150 students in a decade. Responding to those contrasting trends, the Board of Trustees conducted a comprehensive marketing study in 1987, which culminated in a five-year plan that called for changes in mission and programs that exceeded boundaries the Faculty Senate thought prudent. Although faculty, administrators, and trustees agreed that the decline of the traditional day program has to be stemmed, the marketing plan proved to be a lightening rod for disagreement. Soon after its publication, this traditionally collegial learning community was deeply divided.

A new president took office in 1989, with the voices of division at a high pitch. One of the first critical decisions of the new president was to create consensus around the plan's objective without actually implementing its strategies. For example, rather than immediately changing the mission statement, the college developed marketing and vision statements that were more communicative of Lakeland's substance and direction to prospective students. Rather than immediately dropping or consolidating long-standing liberal arts majors (e.g., art, music, philosophy, and religion) the college developed new cooperative programs with international junior colleges and urban churches to populate those majors. At the same time, the number of major fields in the business department grew from two to five, graduate studies in education were offered, and a campus was opened in Tokyo.

No "new" plan for the institution was written outlining rationale for these growth strategies. A tense peace prevailed, even during the college's conduct of an institutional self-study during the 1989-91 years. That self-study process was introduced to the college community as an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that would serve as the foundation of a strategic plan that would follow the comprehensive evaluation visit.

The administration encouraged all members of the community to view the self-study process and team visit as an opportunity to finally resolve old conflicts. What occurred during and after the team visit did, in fact, accomplish that goal. However, the manner in which the conflicts were discussed proved most disquieting to the administration, which had "kept" the peace for three years of continued tension and advancement.

Vocal faculty unloaded on the team of Consultant-Evaluators about trustees and administrators (excluding the president) who had conspired to "sell the soul of the college." Trustees presented the C-Es with an opinion that faculty lived in a pretend world marked by denial of the obvious and insensitivity to "customers." The team concluded that the college's conflict should be addressed by an institutional plan that strengthened the faculty's role in decision-making and that secured both faculty and trustee commitment. The plan was to be submitted to the North Central Association within twelve months of the March 1992 team visit, with a focused visit to follow three years after the plan's submission.

The Plan

Using the Self-Study Report and NCA Team Report as a combined SWOT analysis, nine College Effectiveness Teams were formed to develop strategies responding to twenty-three weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that had been identified in the analysis. Each team included trustees. In March 1993, Lakeland submitted *Crossroads: A Five Year Strategic Plan for Lakeland College* to the NCA. North Central reviewed the plan, found it satisfied the stipulation of the C-Es who had conducted the 1992 visit, and set March 1996 as a date for the mandated focused visit.

The Plan called on the college to:

- restructure academic affairs, with more authority for decision-making vested in an academic council of faculty;
- add library and computer resources;
- add three undergraduate and two graduate majors, and combine three undergraduate majors;
- initiate formal academic articulations with thirteen two-year colleges in Wisconsin and four colleges in Asia and eastern Europe;
- develop a Campus Compact for a community honors code;
- construct an honors student residential complex and a new center for business and technology;
- implement a new Management Information Systems and a corollary staff development program; and
- initiate a campaign for increasing the college's endowment.

The Focused Visit

The team of Consultant-Evaluators met with the same faculty, trustee members, and administrators (plus others) that the 1992 comprehensive team had interviewed. The 1996 team found that the college "has made strong advances with regard to areas of concern from previous NCA visits.... At Lakeland College, among faculty and administration there is palpable evidence of dedication and commitment within an open environment. Faculty are encouraged and excited about the growth and development of programs with relevance to future realities of a global society. There is, obvious to the team, a mutual respect and genuine like between the faculty and the College leadership."

Conclusion

It is possible that Lakeland College was really as different a place in 1996 as the contrasting 1992 and 1996 reports imply. However, it is more likely that Plutarch's Agesilaus described reality for the C-E teams and the college in these brief lines, "It is a circumstance and proper timing that give an action its character and make it either good or bad." Whichever is more accurate, Lakeland benefitted from and endorses the concept and function of focused visits.

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How to Prepare for a Two-College District Focused Visit

John Erwin

NCA focused visits can be confusing for college districts that have more than one institution being asked to report for a given visit. This is especially true if one college has different areas of focus than the other colleges and if the colleges are separately accredited. A well-formed plan is essential for conducting an effective focused visit. Chairs and Coordinators for college districts anticipating an NCA focused visit are the targeted audiences for this presentation. This session will examine not only the particular issues as they were handled by one two-college district, but also hopefully, will offer a process by which a focused visit may be effectively conducted. The outline for the session will be:

- ◇ Brief overview of the focused visit issues
- ◇ How one college district handled the preparation process
- ◇ Summary suggestions for having a successful focused visit

Accreditation History for Iowa Valley Community College District

Ellsworth Community College (ECC) received initial accreditation by the NCA in 1963. Its next visit was scheduled for 1972. In 1972, the college was granted continued accreditation with the next comprehensive evaluation in ten years. The 1982 evaluation resulted in continued accreditation with the next review in ten years. The 1991-92 NCA team recommended continued accreditation with the next review in seven years; with a required report from the district office "providing documentation of resolution of the present financial deficit," due January 15, 1993, and in 1993-94, a focused evaluation on marketing/recruiting, staff development, strategic planning, development of the student academic achievement plan, and the ability of Ellsworth Community College to operate successfully within the structure of the Iowa Valley Community College District.

Marshalltown Community College (MCC) was granted candidacy status by the NCA in 1961 and accreditation in 1966. In 1968, its accreditation was continued as part of the Iowa Valley Community College District. Evaluations in 1972 and 1982 resulted in ten year accreditation periods. The team responsible for the 1991-1992 comprehensive visit also recommended the next review be held in ten years and requested a progress report, focused on strategic planning and the financial status of the college, to be filed on March 1, 1995. The NCA Review Committee changed the report to a focused visit in 1994-95; it added "institutional organization" to the issues to be studied.

During the four-year interlude, Iowa Valley Community College District determined that district-wide accreditation, rather than separate college accreditation, would be desirable. This would give Iowa Valley Continuing Education the opportunity to be reviewed, as well as the separate colleges. Steps had been taken to create a positive sense of belonging to a college district rather than simply being an individual college. For example, some administrators had taken on district-wide responsibilities in the areas of academic affairs, marketing, and student services. A common course identification system had been instituted by 1995; a common calendar and one district-wide committee, the Student Academic Achievement Plan or "Assessment" Committee, had been formed. These initiatives led naturally to the decision to seek district-wide accreditation.

For the focused visit, district-wide accreditation took the form of "readiness" for that accreditation. In other words, the NCA Focused Visit Team would measure the district's readiness for district-wide accreditation as part of the overall focused visit process.

The Planning Stage

A Steering Committee, headed by the Executive Vice President of the District and composed of the Cabinet Administrator from each unit—Continuing Education, Marshalltown Community College, and Ellsworth Community College—was formed. Additional committee members included the Dean of Instruction from each college and the Dean of Continuing Education. Other members of the committee were selected because of their participation on committees working on the focused areas to be examined or because of their editorial/writing ability.

The Steering Committee met for the first time one year prior to the scheduled focused visit. At that meeting, a timeline was established; each focused area sub-committee was assigned a deadline by which it would report. Rough drafts were to be submitted by October; final drafts were to be completed by December. The intention of the Steering Committee was to submit the full document, addressing all focused areas and the student assessment plan, by January for the March NCA focused visit. This time frame was to allow the NCA team ample time to review the materials and request additional information if necessary.

The only exception to this procedure was the Committee on Student Assessment of Academic Achievement. The Plan was submitted much earlier, in order to meet the June 1995 deadline established by NCA for each college to have an acceptable student assessment plan.

A Most Helpful Idea

One of the most useful events in the planning stage for the focused visit occurred when IVCCD invited the NCA staff liaison to visit the college district and to review the rough drafts of the material and offer suggestions to improve the reporting or the process.

Our staff liaison visited the District in November 1995 as IVCCD prepared for the March 1996 focused visit. His comments assisted the District to sharpen the focus of its reporting documents and to reflect upon the processes leading up to strategies that addressed the targeted focus areas. His objective insight uncovered several shortcomings in IVCCD's approach. For example, in the IVCCD Student Achievement and Institutional Effectiveness Plan, he identified the absence of any specific philosophy on general education. As a result of his suggestions and observations about the plan, IVCCD produced a more comprehensive document.

Suggestions for a Successful Focused Visit

1. Choose a Coordinator who is results oriented and who is familiar with the colleges in the district.

2. Plan a budget that anticipates expenses for faculty, administrative, and staff time beyond their normal load. Build an **extra** visit for the NCA person assigned to the college district into the budget.

3. Select an editor for the written reports who establishes a concise timeline and deadlines for rough drafts and final reports.

4. Keep in contact with NCA about the district's progress by telephone, notes, letters, etc. Know the person who is assigned to your district.

5. Schedule a visit from the NCA person assigned to your district six months prior to the actual focused visit, in order to obtain valuable criticism of your progress and/or process in preparation for the actual visit.

6. Use in-service and workshop days for updates on the particular issues addressed by the focused visit.

7. Send the finished report three months prior to the visit. (Our final report was sent in January for a scheduled March focused visit).

8. Set-up a Resource Room, just as a college would for self-study; include catalogs, viewbooks, budget reports, past NCA correspondence and materials, etc.

9. Assign a person as host/hostess for each team member in order to introduce the team member to individuals at each college and to answer any general questions the member may have about the college.

10. Remember, no amount of planning and scheduling for the focused visit can substitute for properly addressing a concern or issue. Make sure each area of focus has been carefully reviewed and any problems resolved, to the best of the district's ability.

Conclusion

Iowa Valley Community College District not only resolved the NCA concerns about professional development, strategic planning, governance, finances, and marketing, but it also received a recommendation from the Focused Visit Team for district-wide accreditation rather than separate accreditation for Marshalltown and Ellsworth Community Colleges.

By following the suggestions made in this presentation and modifying your plan, according to the unique features of your own college district, prospects for a successful NCA Focused Visit will be greatly enhanced.

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Chapter XII

Seeking Initial Affiliation with the Commission

Considering Affiliation:
A Case Study

Lucian Spataro
Anne Scott

Background

For Arizona International Campus (AIC), the question of whether to affiliate or not was closely tied to that of independence. Arizona currently has three public universities. Enrollment growth projections, which revealed a level of growth that could not be accommodated by the current system, resulted in the creation of two branch campuses in the Phoenix area and for southern Arizona the creation of AIC (originally, New Campus).

The Arizona Board of Regents intended for the new institution in southern Arizona to be independent of the University of Arizona. This was due, in part, because the mission of the two institutions would ultimately be very different. The University of Arizona is currently ranked among the top twenty Research I universities in the United States, both in enrollments and research activities. A number of its programs rank among the very best in the nation and the world. In recent years, however, both within the institution and outside it, there has been an increasing demand on the University of Arizona to rededicate itself to the education of undergraduate students. A consensus seems to have formed that this element of the institution's mission has been de-emphasized in favor of basic research and preparation of graduate- and professional-level students. Critics charge that the scramble for research funding and prominence, as well as the pressure on faculty to ensure their own career advancement through publications and other scholarly pursuits, have shortchanged the typical undergraduate student.

Although the University of Arizona has begun to address some of the concerns about the weak undergraduate education, change at large institutions is constrained by tradition and bureaucracy, and can be slow and painful.

Rather than try to change or fix something likely to be fettered by its own long-standing traditions and natural inertia, developing AIC is an exciting opportunity to create a different model of education "from scratch." This opportunity, as well as the mandated difference between the University of Arizona and AIC in size, scope, focus, and other matters, make eventual autonomy for the new institution the only viable option.

Since it was determined that AIC would eventually be independent of the University of Arizona, the issue of accreditation became an important consideration.

- ◇ **Accreditation.** Accreditation is important to institutions of higher education for at least two important reasons: first and foremost, overall quality control, and second, eligibility of their students to receive federal financial aid.

The Arizona Board of Regents has approved seeking separate accreditation from the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges as soon as practicable. This is due to AIC's different mission and the intention to have AIC operate independently from the University of Arizona.

Well-Defined Mission and Goals

It became clear that having a well-defined mission statement and measurable goals would be an important benefit in all aspects of planning and implementation. For example, the issue of location for the new campus forced thinking about what an ideal campus would look like given the goals outlined in the mission. The architects helped in this process by asking specific questions ranging from size and shape of classrooms to the layout of the different buildings, given the goals of AIC. During this time, the assessment team worked to operationalize AIC goals so that an assessment plan could be developed to ensure that they were being met. This operationalization process also helped in describing to outsiders what accomplishments were targeted.

- **Mission.** AIC's mission statement states that the institution "places the highest priority on distinctive liberal arts and practical undergraduate education for a diverse population in an increasingly technological and global society. Distinctiveness is attained through innovativeness, through a willingness to deal with new ideas, and through measurable quality and excellence as reflected in the institution's programs, employees (particularly faculty), and students. International perspectives are emphasized to better prepare students for life and work in an increasingly interdependent political, cultural, and commercial world."
- **Principles.** The guiding principles provide the framework that focuses and directs all of the institution's activities. These six principles are:
  - Distinctiveness through quality
  - Personal and institutional integrity
  - Community service
  - Well-being and the environment
  - Globalism and diversity
  - Realization of human potential

The goals and objectives of Arizona International Campus flow from the mission statement. All resources and activities of students, faculty, and staff focus on the institution's mission. In addition, the Five-Year Strategic Plan is tied directly to the guiding principles of the institution, and the assessment plan helps determine how well AIC is meeting various aspects of its mission.

Benefits of the Accreditation Process

The process of seeking affiliation has provided several important benefits to the institution. Specifically, this process:

- Helped keep development efforts focused on the mission and stated goals/outcomes. Having a level of accountability helped keep all endeavors on target.
- Provided valuable documentation, which has better prepared AIC for other activities, including the training of new faculty and staff. Thorough documentation continues to aid in all development efforts.
- Provided a framework for studying the entire process, which helped ensure that all bases are covered. It also made the development of a comprehensive assessment plan, which so far had only extended to the students, a high priority item.
- Forced us to think about and work through components of our mission quickly. For example, from the beginning a flat organizational structure was envisioned for the campus. In order to accomplish this and still be effective a team approach to decision-making was instituted. This team approach has proven to be very effective at accomplishing many large-scale tasks and for getting a diverse group of people working together that might not otherwise do so.

Conclusion

Although beginning an accreditation process can be stressful to an institution—particularly when it is a new one experiencing pressures from outside the institution—after undergoing the first major step in this process, it is becoming clear that the benefits have made the efforts worthwhile. Not only has AIC remained focused in its planning efforts, it has also been able to meet its goals and continue to strive for excellence.

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Reaching for Success

Jerry Johnson

Introduction

The preparation for Dakota County Technical College's first on-site evaluation visit culminated with the completion of the Self-Study Report. At this point, we were very confident that we had met all the GIRs and adequately addressed all the Criteria. For these reasons we were requesting initial accreditation.

It came as quite a shock when the team chair advised the President that the college should seek candidacy status rather than initial accreditation at the end of the first day of the evaluation visit.

Presenting this news to the faculty, staff, and students in a positive way was of utmost importance. To make the task even more difficult and crucial, the pervading opinion was that anything less than initial accreditation was a failure.

However, using the information, data, suggestions, and advice provided by the consultant-evaluators, we were able to present a very compelling rationale to all the stakeholders. We were able to show that our candidacy was indeed a statement of success rather than a reflection of deficiency. After the March 1994 team visit, the administration, faculty, and staff set out with renewed vigor to create a restructured plan of action with an eye toward accreditation in the next two years.

The success of the approach can be measured by the involvement and cooperation of the faculty, staff, and students that led to a much stronger and better institution and our initial accreditation in March 1996.

The following is a synopsis of the four major stages through which we had to work to arrive at our second on-site evaluation. These stages are the beginning of the self-study process, the implementation of the self-study process, the team visit, and the concluding process.

Beginning the Self-Study Process

The experience of having gone through the preparation of a self-study before was an excellent exercise for the preparation of the second one. For one thing, the information and directions contained in the *Handbook of Accreditation* had more meaning and relevance. Secondly, the revised *Handbook of Accreditation* was much more specific in providing that information. This allowed the Steering Committee to establish clear and valid objectives.

The Steering Committee was headed by the Self-Study Coordinator, an appointee of the President of the college. This committee was made up of the co-chairs of the five criterion committees, the co-chairs of the Assessment Committee, and the President. Each committee was co-chaired by a faculty member and an administrator. Other members of the committees were solicited because of their knowledge and/or experience in a specific area or volunteered because of their interest in a particular area. The full committee totaled approximately 70 people.

It was the responsibility of the Steering Committee to establish the guidelines for the quantity, quality, and relevance of the data that would be included in the self-study. The committee also maintained oversight of the General Institutional Requirements (GIR) and the established timelines to complete the process on schedule.

Implementing the Process

The one underlying theme for the implementation of the self-study process is communication to and among all of the stakeholders. Clear, concise, and accurate information must resonate throughout the organization from the President to the administration to the faculty to the students to the community.

The process begins with a clear understanding and commitment of the purposes of accreditation. The process also requires the full commitment, cooperation, and involvement of the administration, faculty, staff, and students, as well as the advisory committees and other external stakeholders.

The first task of the Steering Committee was to prepare topical outlines for each criterion that adequately explained how the college was accomplishing its mission. The criterion committee chairs then organized working subcommittees to address these topics. Although each criterion committee acted autonomously, it had to coordinate its activities with other criterion committees, when necessary, and adhere to a fairly rigid time schedule. There were established guidelines and a standardized format for submitting reports to the Steering Committee. Some of the guidelines given to the criterion committees include the following:

- ◇ Read and digest the information in the *Handbook of Accreditation*, especially the parts pertinent to your criterion.
- ◇ Gain a thorough understanding of the meaning and intent of the criterion.
- ◇ Make an in-depth review of self-studies of other similar accredited institutions.
- ◇ Make a careful analysis and selection of patterns of evidence that are evaluative in nature.
- ◇ Don't "reinvent the wheel." Whenever and wherever possible, use existing data and processes.

The Steering Committee met weekly to be updated on the progress made and, more importantly, to act as a review panel to assess all the data and information submitted, for compliance with the guidelines.

All the communication devices that were available to the college were used to educate all stakeholders about the purposes and process of accreditation. Internally, there were many scheduled question-and-answer sessions for faculty, staff, and students. Progress reports on the status of the self-study were given at all administrative and faculty and staff meetings. The Student Senate officers were thoroughly briefed and then used as ambassadors and messengers to get the word out to the students. The college newspaper carried articles on the self-study and /or accreditation in all issues. Administration, faculty, staff, and students were given pins to wear that displayed the mission statement of the college and the date of the evaluation visit. Externally, informational brochures were distributed to the general advisory committee and program advisory committee members and to the public at large.

The Team Visit

The preparation for the team visit was a great opportunity for faculty and staff who were either unwilling or unable to make a long-term commitment at the beginning of the self-study process. This segment of the process was of short duration with immediately visible results. At two of our faculty/staff meetings 3 x 5 cards were handed out to everyone. They were asked to write out the shortcomings they saw that detracted from the beauty and efficiency of the physical plant. The cards were collected and categorized by area. Committees were then formed that dealt with each of the deficiencies.

Faculty and students were briefed and made aware of the coming events each day that the evaluators were on campus.

The Resource Room was equipped with a telephone, conference table, comfortable chairs, and a computer and printer. All the references identified in the self-study were clearly labeled and displayed for easy access. The Self-Study Coordinator and a secretary were always available to answer questions and provide assistance.

Concluding the Process

We felt it was fitting that the Steering Committee and some selected faculty members who went "above and beyond" the call of duty working on the self-study, be invited to the exit interview. This allowed them to hear first-hand the evaluators' report and recommendations.

The President called a faculty meeting to make a formal announcement of the evaluators' recommendations and to praise the faculty and staff for their efforts.

With the events still fresh in our minds, the Steering Committee met again to critique the whole process. This included the documentation of those things that worked well and listing alternatives for the less favorable outcomes.

The next assignment for the Steering Committee was the preparation of the institutional response to the concerns identified by the consultant-evaluators. This response required thoughtful preparation as well as some long-term planning. It was the keystone event that exemplified our accreditation process, namely, reaching for success by continuously seeking to improve.

Our next on-site evaluation visit is scheduled for the year 2001. One lesson that we have learned is that by keeping good records, we can save ourselves a lot of headaches and unnecessary work in the years to come. For this reason, and starting now, we have set up an archive that contains all the pertinent documentation from our candidacy on-site evaluation visit in 1994 to the initial accreditation on-site visit in 1996.

Helpful Tips for the Self-Study Coordinator

These tips are offered, not as expert advice, but rather as decisions that have been reached by listening to others who have gone before, or by trial and error, or out of sheer frustration. They worked in our situation and we hope they may, at least, offer a new scheme for you to try or prevent a possible error.

☐ **Communicate with All Stakeholders**

Perhaps the most important responsibility of the Self-Study Coordinator is to maintain thorough and timely communication with all college stakeholders. This is accomplished by providing regular oral and written updates to the college President; NCA Committee members, Faculty Senate, faculty, staff, and administration; general advisory committee members, program advisory committee members, Student Senate, and other student groups. Although meetings should be held frequently, individuals should not be required to attend meetings, but should be encouraged to do so. For those who choose not to attend, make sure they receive communications through other means such as the college newsletter, e-mail, intranet, or in-house video.

☐ **Stick to Timelines**

The Self-Study Coordinator needs to establish timelines in concurrence with NCA and institutional needs. These timelines need to be tightly constructed, but extra time should to be included to accommodate "work slippage." This "slippage" may be caused by holiday breaks, professional and personal interruptions, and competing work priorities. The Self-Study Coordinator needs to closely monitor these timelines and provide periodic reminders of work due dates to those who are principally responsible for self-study activities. The Self-Study Coordinator may have to intervene from time-to-time to make sure necessary work is completed. In the worst case individuals may have to be removed from their self-study roles because they are either unwilling or unable to complete their responsibilities in a timely manner. This would indeed be a rare exception because all want the self-study to be successful.

☐ **Involve the President**

The self-study process can only be effective if the President is kept abreast of activities and progress. Since the President is normally the busiest person on campus a special challenge exists for the Self-Study Coordinator to effectively engage him/her in the process. It may appear to the Self-Study Coordinator that the President isn't interested, but he/she really is; it's just that there are too many obligations that must be met at this level of the institution's organization chart. Thus, the Self-Study Coordinator must wisely choose how and when to communicate with the President, and when it is important to involve the President in salient activities such as meeting kickoffs and achievement/milestone recognition.

☐ **Use the NCA Staff Liaison**

The Self-Study Coordinator needs to maintain good communication with the NCA staff liaison and capitalize on his/her expertise. Obviously, the NCA staff liaison should be used to review the self-study document prior to final printing and his/her recommendations should be incorporated. It is also important that the NCA liaison be scheduled to visit the campus during the self-study process. During this visit the liaison can meet with college stakeholders and provide consultation on issues and concerns. The liaison can also be used to motivate staff to invest greater effort in successfully accomplishing institutional improvement.

☐ **Pick Reliable Leaders**

The old adage of picking the busiest people to accomplish the job seems to hold true in the self-study process. Those individuals that are known to "get the job done" and "to do it right the first time" are the candidates needed to lead various groups in accomplishing the self-study. Such leaders are most likely respected by their peers and thus will have followers who will assist them in every possible way to accomplish assigned work tasks. Leaders can identify individuals with special talents who are not involved in the self-study. These colleagues should be asked to participate by contributing their knowledge on a particular subject, writing expertise, proofing skills, computer skills, desktop publishing skills, graphics talent, or use of statistical analysis software. Overall, the success of the self-study can only be assured through the involvement of individuals from all levels of the institution. Individuals, once involved, will then share in ownership of the self-study, which is the real key to self-study success.

☐ **Carefully Review Written Documentation**

The Self-Study Coordinator must carefully review all self-study drafts/narrative proposals and other writings for accuracy and appropriate representation of facts. Thus, the Self-Study Coordinator must possess a thorough knowledge of the institution in order to appropriately function as the "quality assurance department" for the self-study process. The Self-Study Coordinator must be careful to avoid "stepping on toes" when bringing inadequately written information to the attention of the writer (s). Special attention must be paid to writings on the same subject matter prepared by different committees as frequently these writings will conflict with each other. The Self-Study Coordinator must then serve as a mediator among committees to establish consensus in representing the facts. Also, the Self-Study Coordinator must make comparisons between the Basic Institutional Data (BID) and the Self-Study Report to make sure data are not in conflict.

☐ **Remember Quality Is "Job Number One"**

The final draft of the self-study must have a professional appearance and be crisp and clean. The print, tables, and graphics must be of high quality in every respect. A small select group should be the final "clearing house" to make sure the self-study is the best possible product that can be generated by the institution. The Self-Study Coordinator, the editor, and one or two other knowledgeable individuals should take a "final pass" through the document. All information needs to be grammatically correct, and errors of omission or fact need to be identified and corrected.

☐ Review the Literature

There is a plethora of information available to guide the Self-Study Coordinator in conducting the self-study. Useful documentation includes NCA *Handbook*, annual NCA *Collection of Papers*, handouts obtained at the NCA Annual Meeting, books, and other publications. Self-study documents prepared by similar institutions that have achieved accreditation are particularly useful in this regard. When it is all said and done, however, a self-study must reflect upon the specific institution being evaluated. Thus, the Self-Study Coordinator must carefully screen the information and only incorporate ideas that are appropriate and useful to his/her institution.

☐ Strive for Cultural Change

Changing an institutional mission from that of a post-secondary institution to a collegiate institution and then seeking higher education accreditation requires careful "care and feeding" by those involved in the transformation. In order for the institution to successfully accomplish its higher education mission and purposes the leadership must strive for cultural change, rather than cosmetic change. The Self-Study Coordinator can greatly assist in this regard by seriously acknowledging the historical presence of tightly-held values and beliefs. Patience and time are needed to build a new community centered around the higher education paradigm. Seeking NCA-CIHE affiliation can effectively be used as the means to the end of successfully bringing about institutional cultural change.

☐ Establish a "War Room"

As the self-study process is in its final stages it is useful to establish an "NCA War Room" that ultimately becomes the Self-Study Resource Room at the time of the NCA Team Visit. The Self-Study Coordinator, with selected assistance, must assume responsibility for organizing this room by screening all exhibit materials and assuring that they are stored in an orderly manner for easy retrieval by the visiting team. The exhibit materials need to be catalogued so the visiting team can quickly find materials appropriate to their areas of inquiry. This room must be equipped with work tables, chairs, office supplies, a telephone and internal and external telephone directories, computer and printer, fax and copy machine (if possible, otherwise immediate access is needed), and other items that contribute to an efficient work area.

Although NCA stresses the importance of each college developing its own unique responses, it is helpful to learn what other colleges have done in the search for accreditation. It is our hope that, in learning about our experience, you will be able to pick and choose ideas that will work well for your college.

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Maximizing the Consultant Component of Evaluation Visits for Candidate Institutions

Glen F. Fenter
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Background

Mid-South Community College (MSCC) is a public, two-year college authorized to grant associate degrees and technical certificates in both transfer and technical/occupational programs. First established as a vocational-technical school in the late 1970s, the institution was one of ten such Arkansas schools legislated in 1991 to become technical or community colleges. Of these ten, MSCC was deemed the least likely to succeed by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, because of administrative and financial weaknesses, low enrollment, and inadequate facilities. Nevertheless, Mid-South was the only one of these ten institutions to pursue status as a community college, a choice that required passage of a local millage and satisfaction of more stringent requirements for regional accreditation.

The college was granted candidacy status with NCA in February 1995 and completed its evaluation visit for continued candidacy in November 1996. Its accreditation visit is scheduled for the fall of 1998.

Since it first began to seek candidacy status in 1992, the college had been involved in a tremendous growth process. Student enrollment has escalated at an annual rate of approximately 42 percent—from 100 to 800 students; the numbers of staff and faculty have more than doubled; administrative departments and academic programs germane to higher education have been created; planning, budgeting, governance, and assessment processes have been developed and implemented; approximately $6 million dollars has been raised to provide new facilities; and two self-studies have been completed.

The influx of new initiatives and new personnel makes change a constant at the College; and personnel are so involved in creating and implementing new initiatives that they often forget to step aside to consider how others may have addressed similar issues or problems. Following the institution's evaluation visit for initial candidacy, college personnel realized that they had been overly-concerned about achieving immediate satisfaction of the General Institutional Requirements and Criteria in order to obtain the evaluation team's approval and not sufficiently prepared to *benefit* from the visit.

A formative, developmental approach to candidacy would have been a better approach. Team members brought expertise and experience that were of significant benefit in establishing priorities for action and in effecting refinements and improvements to programs and processes. However, key opportunities for assistance during this first visit were missed, because most personnel were not primed or prepared to seek help. Consequently, the college's second evaluation visit (for continued candidacy) was approached from a different perspective.

Preparing College Personnel to Benefit from the Evaluation Visit

Institutions should take care to prepare the Self-Study Report far enough in advance that all campus personnel have the time to review and contemplate the document. Even in institutions where everyone participates in the self-study process, self-study committee members most likely focus so intently on their own areas of investigation that they do not have a holistic picture of the institution.

Campus leaders should provide opportunities for personnel to discuss the self-study as a whole and determine how the findings of their particular committees relate to and impact on the findings of other groups. If the self-study is, as it should be, an honest assessment of the institution's strengths and challenges, the challenges to institutional development should be stated clearly in the Self-Study Report. However, personnel need the opportunity to review and discuss both these identified challenges and possible ways of addressing them, so that they can develop specific questions to ask the consultant-evaluators. The development of such questions should be a mandatory part of the self-study process.

Because very few personnel at Mid-South had ever experienced an evaluation visit by an accrediting agency, the President arranged for a "mock visit" a month before the scheduled NCA visit for initial candidacy. The "mock" team consisted of a former member of the NCA Consultant-Evaluator Corps; two Self-Study Coordinators from sister institutions that had recently had successful visits; and a representative from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, who had expertise in accreditation initiatives.

The benefits of the mock visit were two-fold. Not only did college personnel get a preview of how a visit would be conducted and what their roles would be (which allayed many anxieties about being evaluated), they also received a critique of the Self-Study Report and the materials in the Resource Room. College personnel then had the opportunity to address some identified weaknesses in both areas, prior to the team visit.

Challenges identified through Mid-South's candidacy visit included improvements to shared governance, institutional planning, cost-centered budgeting, academic rigor, and integrity of student records. While all were addressed by the "mock" and actual evaluation teams, college personnel did not consider specifically how to enlist the consultant-evaluators' help in determining ways to address these challenges.

During the two years between the college's NCA visits for initial and continued candidacy, the President searched for expert assistance with institutional planning and assessment. However, the fees charged by many consultants are prohibitive for small colleges with limited budgets. Consequently, assistance was sought from professionals who serve, or have served, in the NCA Consultant-Evaluator Corps. Because MSCC was a candidate institution with NCA, they charged their NCA *per diem* rate. In addition to providing interim assistance with planning and assessment, two of these consultants conducted a second "mock" visit prior to the college's continued candidacy visit.

Realizing the benefits of viewing NCA visits as "formative" rather than "summative" assessments, College personnel were much better prepared to take advantage of consultant-evaluators' expertise during the second round of visits. Self-study committee chairpersons, faculty, and administrators identified specific topics to discuss with the visitors. These topics related to how well the institution had addressed the concerns and suggestions identified from the first NCA visit, whether college personnel had correctly identified the remaining challenges, and suggestions for ways to address the remaining challenges.

In preparing for the visit, a "mock" visit and the development of questions prior to the NCA visit can be particularly helpful to the President. He/she should ensure that the team chair has scheduled time for him to meet with each team member. These meetings are opportunities for candid discussions of internally identified priorities and concerns. Experienced team members can bring a wealth of information gleaned from a variety of institutions. They can help the President establish priorities for action, identify other institutions that have successfully solved the same problems faced by the institution, and provide a broad perspective on external trends that may affect the growth and development of the institution.

Ideally, questions for the consultant-evaluators should be prepared in advance and reviewed by the Self-Study Steering Committee and senior administrators to eliminate duplication and to establish priorities, based upon the needs of the institution and upon the timeline established to achieve accreditation. Mid-South personnel were much better prepared for the second visit, because they had identified implementation of the assessment plan as a major priority. Consequently, they had developed specific questions about how to document the use of assessment data in effecting curricular and instructional improvements. Team members provided materials from their own institutions and identified other sources of assistance, based upon their visits to other colleges.

Because time is of the essence during evaluation visits, the President should inform the team chair, in advance, of the institution's desire to maximize the consultant aspect of the visit. Equally important, such a request establishes a positive tone for the visit. It indicates that the institution views the accreditation process as a beneficial and positive opportunity for continued improvement. In addition, clinical self-examination and the willingness to discuss openly one's weaknesses are signs of institutional maturity.

Either the President or the Self-Study Coordinator should provide the team chair with a written list of the target areas or questions. Such a list can enable the team to identify resources and prepare advice—in advance of the visit. The team chair may even decide to include consultations between the team and college personnel in the calendar of events for the visit or may devote part of the exit interview to addressing these questions.

The President should encourage all college constituencies to be open, candid, and receptive in their conversations with team members during the team visit. Although certain people may be designated specifically to seek assistance from the team on identified issues, all personnel will benefit from knowing what those issues are and from being prepared to discuss them with the team.

Following the visit, college personnel can discuss the team members' advice and pursue identified resources to develop strategies for addressing the challenges the institution has yet to confront.

Summary

The candidacy program of the North Central Association provides guidance for new institutions to develop quality programs and processes. Much as educators criticize students for wanting the diploma more than the education, candidate institutions should not focus solely on the validation that accreditation provides but rather on the candidacy process as one of learning and growth, which helps them refine and fulfill their institutional missions.

The North Central Association can support this process by establishing a "bureau" of current or former consultant-evaluators who are willing to assist candidate institutions, at the NCA per diem rate, with "mock" visits or with developing and implementing strategies that help the institution meet the General Institutional Requirements or Criteria for Accreditation. The C-Es can provide direction and identify resources that current staff may be unable to provide or that the college cannot otherwise afford.

Even if institutions choose not to avail themselves of such help, the proper preparation *prior* to a formal evaluation visit can maximize the consultant component. As a result, the formal visit itself could be a tremendous value when compared to the fees charged by most consultants.

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From Candidacy to Initial Accreditation: The Self-Study Coordinator's Role

Nancy A. Kalman

Introduction

Ozarks Technical Community College received its Order For Organization from the state of Missouri in April of 1990. The college moved from organization to initial accreditation within six years. During that time, the college prepared three self-studies and one mini self-study for a focused visit.

This paper is intended to pass along the many hints and suggestions that other Self-Study Coordinators and North Central staff have provided for me. This paper will quickly review the steps that this college took to acquire initial accreditation. More detail will be given related to the coordinator's role and responsibilities.

The Road to Accreditation

A small band of administrators attended the NCA Annual Meeting in March of 1991, trying to determine what was needed to become a candidate for accreditation. Three of us attended the same presentation and came out with three different views of what was needed. The flexibility that is written into suggested timelines and criteria are necessary to meet the wide array of missions that member institutions represent, but it does seem very confusing at first. As a new college, it was important to the institution to progress towards accreditation as rapidly as possible in order to validate its quality and legitimacy. Most of the administrators had come from regionally accredited institutions and set in place the policies and standards that were essential for the college to meet its mission, and continue to do so.

The college grew from and now operates the area vocational high school. With laboratories, classrooms, and a few instructors in place, the college started employing additional faculty and developing its curriculum for the fall 1991 start of classes. The faculty were enthusiastic and everyone across the campus had a sense of camaraderie and commitment to the students. The college was also in a community that did not understand the purposes of a community or technical two-year college, and there were already several private four-year colleges and one university in the region. The college's operating the high school component also made accreditation and the image of the college more difficult.

Candidacy

After NCA approval of the institution's Preliminary Information Form (PIF), the college brought a consultant to campus that was very familiar with the accreditation process and also familiar with technical education. The college also requested that its NCA staff liaison visit the campus. The staff visit was at NCA expense and was extremely beneficial. The staff liaison explained the accreditation process and philosophy to all constituents of the college; especially, board of trustee members, faculty, and staff.

The dean of student services served as the Self-Study Coordinator for the candidacy process and moved the process along very rapidly. The PIF was approved in November 1991. The Self-Study Report was submitted in February 1992. The team visit occurred in March and the Review Committee met in June. The college receive candidacy status upon Commission action in August 1992, less than one year after initiating the process. This rapid pace was partially due to financial aid availability for the students and is not the recommended time frame.

OTC then decided to add the Associate of Arts degree. Since this was a major change in the institution's Statement of Affiliation Status (SAS), the college conducted a mini self-study and entertained a two-day, two-person focused visit. The visit occurred in April of 1993. The second visit in a little over a year. The college received the change in its SAS.

Initial Accreditation

After candidacy status is obtained an institution has six years to obtain initial accreditation.* Every second year the college will receive a team visit to determine the college's progress toward accreditation. OTC requested consideration for initial accreditation during its first review. During 1993-94, campus committees collected rapidly changing data. Enrollment at the institution was in a tremendous growth mode, new faculty had been hired and additional classroom space had been rented. For the first five years, the college was also receiving special growth funds from the state of Missouri, and the college had been able to form a significant reserve without sacrificing funds for equipment and instruction. The college was also progressing towards a master plan for a permanent campus; however, the public had soundly defeated the college's increased levy to fund a new campus at the edge of town.

The college did not receive initial accreditation at this time and was granted continued candidacy. It was a disappointment to everyone involved, but several lessons were learned.

- ◇ There is a large leap between candidacy and accreditation. You cannot say how you are going to do something, you have to say how it is being done and give proof of the outcome.
- ◇ The General Institutional Requirements (GIRs) need documentation, quotations from the law, and the policies of the institution. The GIRs were the last chapter in the self-study, but needed a position of prominence.
- ◇ OTC's staff liaison had changed during the preparation of the self-study. The new liaison was helpful in reviewing the draft of the Self-Study Report, but was not familiar with the institution. We should have requested a campus visit.
- ◇ The same writer, who had done such a good job on the candidacy Self-Study Report, was asked to write the initial accreditation report. The committees provided updated information. However, the self-study ended up reading very much like the candidacy report.
- ◇ Very clear plans for the future need to be incorporated. This includes the strategic plan, facilities planning (in OTC's case), and financial plan. The college also needed to clarify its Student Academic Achievement Assessment plan and provide evidence that the college "is doing what it says it is doing."

Details of the Self-Study Coordinator's Role

As the Self-Study Coordinator for an unsuccessful initial accreditation, I thought long and hard about what I would do differently, how I would motivate others to go through the process again, and basically—would I want to do it again. I was asked to do it again, and said "yes" because I was determined to see the college through a successful accreditation. A new faculty member, who had been a technical writer for a large company, was selected to lead the writing process. We worked together from the beginning to develop the plan and timeline. We each read the *Handbook of Accreditation* several times before developing a chapter by chapter outline of the report, even before committees were formed. The committees were formed to collect data that would fit into the chapters. The committee chairs were carefully selected and became members of the steering committee. The steering committee worked on the timeline, the purposes of the accreditation process, and the GIRs. Each committee received the section of the *Handbook* that pertained to its responsibility and directions to update data, identify strengths and concerns, and make recommendations to remedy any concerns. Each committee was to seek and add one or students to its membership. This time, I was determined to meet with all the committees and keep tabs of the progress each was making. I didn't make every meeting, but came close. As it seems with all projects, some committees were very enthusiastic and had all members participating. However, a few members could never seem to make the meetings or never completed their assignment. The writer and I filled in where there were gaps. The committees submitted their reports in written format, including tables and graphs. The writer and I could not determine what was included in the statistics. We ended up asking the committees for raw data, to be sure that we were consistent. I think I would ask the committee to submit the raw data in the first place. We also decided to use a cut-off date for collecting data. An update of data was supplied to the team when they arrived on campus.

The printing of the Self-Study Report was more difficult than anticipated. The printing was done at our own print shop and my secretary did the layout. The writer and I chose the final paper and cover stock several months ahead of time. We also wanted tabs that required ordering larger paper. The chapter outline was to be printed on the tabbed pages, but that step didn't get accomplished. I would recommend that the tabs be laminated, but I was just thrilled to get our tabs labeled. The writer and I chose a print font, layout style, and header. The difficulty came with choosing mirrored pages (one facing the other). When trying to copy a draft for everyone to review, the copy machine would skip a page or two here and there. I finally decided to take it to a commercial, quick print, but they also had pages missing. I have seen reports that did not have an appendix. We tried to include as much as possible in the text. With quality scanners, we should be able to eliminate the appendix. The writer and I attended the Self-Study Coordinator's Workshop and felt good when the mentor suggested keeping the Self-Study Report short and to the point. OTC's Self-Study Report contained 192 pages of text, the Basic Institutional Data Forms, and 49 pages of appendices.

The college asked three friends to do a mock on-site visit. It was set up like the real thing, but didn't function quite like we had planned. Many questions were asked of the evaluators and they met with various persons to review specific aspects, such as the GIR's. They were tough, as we had asked them to be. It was a good move and really made us work harder in the last few weeks.

One committee that was formed was different from other structures that I have seen. This was the communications committee. It was assigned the task of keeping everyone on campus informed of the progress and firing everyone up to go through the on-site visit one more time. It was a very creative committee. They published a newsletter that included a moving timeline, culminating in the team visit. Pin-on buttons were made that were distributed on NCA Days: the last Friday of the month. The buttons read, "Ask Me About NCA" and the date of our visit. The buttons were distributed on sheets of paper that explained what NCA was and what accreditation means to OTC. The persons with buttons were to pass on two more buttons on the next NCA Day. One of the last NCA Days included a prize patrol. Members of the committee took turns wearing silly hats and asked students, faculty, and staff questions relative to the institution and NCA. The prizes for a correct answer were really fun. The final hurrah came just before the visit, when the committee hosted "Puttin On The Dog" day. Everyone with a button (and more were found) was admitted to the cafeteria for hot dogs and treats. Blue and white balloons filled the air and a scrolling Powerpoint presentation told all about NCA and cleaning of offices. The dean of instruction was the office patrol, who awarded appropriate symbols to the faculty and staff offices. As you can see, this committee had a lot of fun, which was needed when everyone was getting uptight.

The Self-Study Coordinator may or may not be asked to make reservations for the consultant-evaluators. That is usually up to the president of the institution. Our president asked the chair of the team how he wanted to handle the schedule and accommodations and suggested that I be the contact. I made the accommodations and made sure that the appropriate persons received invitations to specific sessions, luncheons, and dinners. The chair suggested that the college make a schedule and he would revise it, if needed. Since team members usually arrive on Sunday, I left a welcome note on college stationary at the hotel. Sometimes arrangements are needed for transportation from the airport to the hotel. All team members received a city map and general information about the city before their arrival. A general orientation video was also sent to the team members, which showed an aerial view of the surrounding countryside, the city, the position of the college facilities in the city, and some views of inside the facilities.

The Resource Room

The Resource Room was also a challenge. How do you organize material that is in several volumes along with a one page document? As we wrote the self-study, we kept a log of all material that was mentioned as being in the Resource Room. Our college did not have a nice room to serve as a Resource Room. Comfortable chairs were brought into a small conference room. Hospital wall outlets were covered with a clock and some pictures. One table was set up with coffee and fruit in the morning and cold drinks in the afternoon. College coffee cups, with the team member's name on it, were supplied in the Resource Room. You need to ask each member of the team about computer hardware and software, and especially a printer with the proper driver. A list of all documents that should be displayed in the Resource Room can be found in the NCA *Handbook*. The Self-Study Coordinator at the neighboring university suggested a solution to displaying small documents. Small hanging file boxes were used to place small reports, small booklets, and single page documents; and three ring binders stood on a table. Larger and older institutions use standing file cabinets, with the drawers labeled. A list of resources and where they were located was placed in front of all the materials. Displays of the campus master plan were on an easel and the many brochures and communications materials were displayed on a table.

The Final Step

Once the team is on campus, there isn't a lot more for the coordinator to do. Some team members may request transportation or directions around campus, and the president's secretary served as the central point to arrange meetings with specific persons. I assisted whenever requested. The on-site visit went as we had hoped, and the team recommended initial accreditation with no concerns. After the president and team chair went before a review committee, the Commission met in August of 1996 and voted to grant OTC initial accreditation. Everyone at OTC celebrated, especially me.

Ed. Current Commission policy limits candidacy to four years.

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